GREAT FRENCH PREACHERS

Lent and Holy Week

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I

Lent and Holy Week

SERMONS BY BOURDALOUE, DE LA BOISSIÈRE, A. VINET, BOSSUET

TRANSLATED AND EDITED

BY

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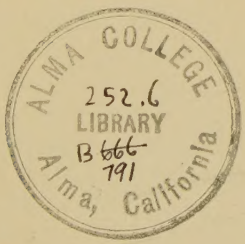

LONDON
GRANT RICHARDS
1904

1699

NOTE

In order to make a public use of these sermons (for which purpose they are so well adapted), it will be necessary merely to premise that they were originally delivered in the presence of Royalty; and thus the congregation need not miss the always interesting, and often touching, allusions to be found in the address to the King, with which many of them conclude.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
	PREFACE	3
I.	THE SCANDAL OF THE CROSS (*Septuagesima to Quinquagesima*) . . .	9
II.	THE CHRISTIAN CARNIVAL (*Ash Wednesday, and First and Second Weeks*) .	63
III.	PURE RELIGION AND UNDEFILED (*Third, Fourth, and Fifth Weeks*) . . .	127
IV.	BLESSED BE THE KING THAT COMETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD (*Palm Sunday*)	169
V.	THE SCIENCE OF SUFFERING (*Holy Week*)	189

A Three Hours' Service for Good Friday, arranged with Hymns Ancient and Modern, and also Church Militant Hymns, is published separately.

PREFACE

IN the following pages will be found an attempt to provide English Readers with a thoroughly good Translation of the Sermons by Bourdaloue, Bossuet, Massillon, Vinet, De La Boissière and others; so that the literary excellence of these works may be as accessible to the lovers of literature this side the Channel as they are to those on the other. Even this present so-called godless French Republic has taken care that these models of matter and style shall form part of the Educational Course of every young Frenchman in the State Schools. The son of a *marchand de bois et de charbons*, for instance, I find to be familiar with the Titles and general contents of these Church Classics, and I am urged by him to translate such and such an one as being the most famous or most to his own liking.

Are our English youths of his level equally conversant with the works of WESLEY (if they were, they would certainly not be *Wesleyans!*), of ROBERTSON of Brighton, PUSEY, LIDDON, and others.

Might we not with advantage take a leaf out of our neighbour's School book in this respect, and provide text-books of the works of those famous Preachers, ancient and modern, whose names adorn the history of the Catholic Church of England? The gain, both intellectual and spiritual, would be great.

From such a French School text-book I quote the following remarks of Cardinal Maury, as to Bossuet's amazing knowledge and constant reference to Holy Scripture, and which are just as applicable to Bourdaloue at all events, if not to all the others:—

"What gives the Sermons of Bossuet their special fulness and substance is the marvellous use he makes of Holy Scripture. That is the inexhaustible mine in which he finds his contrasts, his illustrations, his freshness, and his vivid pictures. We find him constantly elucidating the Old Testament by the light of the New. He grasps the whole economy of Religion, bringing together all its scattered beauties to form one sublime and harmonious whole.

"Instead of quoting from the Books of the Bible in the cold, critical style of some erudite scholar, he plunges into them with the fervour of the orator, full of nervous strength and poetic fire. He does not give us the dry bones of the bare letter, but he groups before us the lights and shades of a picture, and he so skilfully

blends the thoughts of Scripture with his own, that they seem to be his own creatures, or at least that they were conceived expressly for the use he makes of them."

A young French friend told me that his teacher at the *Écôle Municipale* said, when these extracts were being read aloud in class: "The Bible seems to have been made for Bossuet!" Hence we may gather that we need not expect Bossuets, Bourdaloues, Liddons, or Spurgeons, apart from reverent, enthusiastic, loving, soul-saturating study of Holy Scripture.

As we read the Sermons of these Great Divines, we cannot fail to be struck with the strong family likeness underlying all superficial differences of clime, race, and ecclesiastical government. Not one of these would have spurned the grand name, the indispensable title of "Evangelical." No man can be Evangelical without being Catholic. No man can be Catholic without being Evangelical. Let us keep these good labels in their adjectival forms, and not harden them into Party *Nouns!* The harm is done when we begin to speak of this man as *a* Catholic, and of that as *an* Evangelical. The same may be said as to the Protestant label. Keep it in its original adjectival, or participial condition. The first Protestants were the staunchest Catholics who protested against uncatholic pretension and practice. Bossuet

himself becomes *protestant* when, in his *Unity of the Church*,* he protests against divergence from the old paths, demanding to be governed according to the decrees of ancient Councils, and by the Canon Law, which form the safeguards of National Churches and of the rights of local Bishops. Bourdaloue constantly claims for himself the title "Evangelical," oftentimes employing it in the sense some modern Christians give to the word "Gospel;" "our Gospel-Pulpit" being a not infrequent expression of his. He speaks of the Altar as the "Table of the Lord," and of himself as a "Minister of the Gospel."

It may also be premised that in these Sermons by Roman Catholic Preachers there is little or no *Roman* Catholicism. Its modern developments, especially those of 1870, had not then been reached, and it is very doubtful whether Bossuet would ever have accepted them. Both he and Bourdaloue were faithful sons of the Roman Branch of the Holy Catholic Church, as they were both patriotic defenders of the rights of their own particular Church and Realm. But of both they were, likewise, the faithful critics, and for neither Pope nor King would they swerve from their higher allegiance to what their Conscience taught them to be the right and the truth.

* Vol. v. of the Pocket Edition of this Series.

These sermons shed interesting side-lights on Court life under Louis XIV., the majority of them having been preached before the King. One of their charms consists in the respectful, tactful, forceful way in which these spiritually minded lovers of their King, their Country, and their God strive to blend the interests of all three. They have the boldness of Saint John the Baptist, the tact and sympathy of Saint Paul, and the loving nature of Saint John.

In these days when the relation of National Churches to the whole Church is becoming a central question, Bossuet's attitude as a defender of the rights of the Church of France against undue Papal interference, must interest all students of the ancient and modern history of England and of Europe. As evidence of the truth of this assertion, we may quote the Encyclical Letter of the PAN-ANGLICAN CONFERENCE of 1888, which says: "We desire, in our outlook into the future, to call to mind the well-known declaration of the Gallican Clergy, 1682," and also the words of Dr. Pusey in a letter to Père Hyacinth: "It seems to me that the only hope of reunion between the Churches rests in that old plan of your great Bossuet, which is called Gallicanism."

If, however, as is sometimes the case, the Reader becomes conscious of a taint of Mediæval doctrine, the Translator feels confident

that, as in his own case, such taint will not be found to impair the spiritual and intellectual benefit to be derived from the perusal of these profoundly religious, eloquent, and earnest utterances.

They are admirably suited for public reading, savouring as they do of the open-air freshness of momentary inspiration rather than of the premeditated thought of theologians in their study, some three centuries ago.

After all, the greatest differences and divergence of mind and habit, existing among the widespread members of God's one great Family, are perfectly compatible with—indeed, they illustrate it!—that Family Likeness which is the very symbol of unity in variety:

"All beaming with the likeness of their Lord."

May those evils which the craft and subtlety of the Devil or Man worketh against this our unity be brought to nought!

C. H. B.

Septuagesima

I

THE SCANDAL OF THE CROSS

BOURDALOUE

Born at Bourges A.D. 1632. Died A.D. 1704

NOTE

"THE SCANDAL OF THE CROSS"

THAT this scandal is still felt at the present day may be gathered from the two following contemporary extracts :—

"Looking at the motives that led the Jews to find offence in the Cross, and looking into our own hearts, pride and love of independence were equally found. Let Englishmen consider, Was there any vice more deeply rooted in their hearts than that which led the Jews to find the Cross a stumbling-block? People would accept the ordinary principles of English Protestantism, would say they do not rely on their own merit, and would thank God that their whole trust was in Christ; but then they would say they had never done anything very wrong, meaning that they had not fallen into the hands of the police, or been guilty of anything disreputable in the eyes of their neighbours. In their pride they claimed that they had kept their position and had not lost caste. This pride in every human heart made confession of wrong-doing so difficult. To go about confessing our sins to others would make us a nuisance to society and morbid to ourselves; but no good Christian passed any considerable portion of his time without the duty of saying to some one 'I was completely wrong.' How difficult, too, to confess one's religious or political party in the wrong! High Church or Low Church become identified with some particular movement, and little progress was made because belief became stereotyped in the position taken up, and pride forbade the acknowledgment of the wrong. It was the same in political parties. The offence of the Cross is as real for Englishmen of to-day as it was for the Jews of old; it lies in the characteristic vices of the race—pride

and the love of a false independence keeping us from surrender to God."—Canon Gore, Sermon, Good Friday, 1901.

"The sacraments of Catholicism are nothing more than magical operations that in the eyes of reason have no value whatever, and a God who can only forgive men their sins by inflicting infinite sufferings on an innocent person substituted for them is a monster whom we cannot worship, insomuch as the humblest of human beings that has any delicacy of conscience is morally superior to him."—*Le Protestantisme Libéral*, Par Jean Réville, Paris, 1903.

THE
SCANDAL OF THE CROSS

Assumpsit autem Jesus duodecim et ait illis: Ecce ascendimus Ierosolymam, et consummabuntur omnia, quæ scripta sunt per prophetas de Filio Hominis. Tradetur enim Gentibus et illudetur, et flagellabitur, et conspuetur; et postquam flagellaverint, occident eum. . . . Et ipsi nihil horum intellexerunt, et erat verbum illud absconditum ab eis.

And He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written by the Prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of Man. For He shall be delivered up unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and shamefully entreated, and spit upon: and they shall scourge and kill Him. . . . And they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them.—S. Luke xviii. 31.*

* Holy Gospel for Quinquagesima Sunday.

PROLOGUE

A DOUBLE DANGER

THAT, Christian People, is what has stirred and troubled so many hearts, what has indeed shocked the whole world and scandalized Public Opinion: Jesus the Christ covered with shame and ignominy: Jesus the Christ suffering and dying on a cross. That is the Offence and Scandal of the Cross, in which all other scandals are included and summed up.

For to tell of a God who was crucified is to tell of a God brought to nought, of a God of no importance, of a God who was ill-treated by man!

And since He went through all this of His own free will and choice, it is to tell of a God who was *content* to be looked down upon, to be humiliated, to suffer pain and persecution.

Since, moreover, the choice and predilection of God appraises the value and fixes the price of things; therefore to tell of a God who took kindly to all this, is to tell of a God who commends it all to *us*, who sets great store

thereby, who prescribes it, who has established it as the basis of man's perfection ; and who has in consequence imposed upon us the indispensable obligation to think highly of it ourselves and of paying it our homage ; for it is but meet that the creature should conform his tastes and preferences to those of His Sovereign Creator and His God.

And yet, My Dear Hearers, it has been by these humiliations and by this cross that men have allowed themselves to be repelled : to such an extent, moreover, that even the Apostles brought up in the School of God's own Son, understood nothing of what He was telling them—of the indignities He was to suffer at Jerusalem, and the death that awaited Him there: *Et ipsi nihil horum intellexerunt : et erat verbum istud absconditum ab eis.** And they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them.

Are not we, too, daily discovering a like scandal and offence? Show us a God who shall be Almighty and All-Glorious in His manifestation, and our minds will readily comprehend the hints and outlines vouchsafed us of His grandeur.

But when it comes to exhibiting this God to us in the eclipse and agony of a punishment as shameful as it is cruel and revolting, then and

* S. Luke xviii. 31.

there our minds begin to feel a natural repulsion ; and it is in this repulsion, whose untoward movement we follow all too readily, that the ungodliness which finds its way to the very heart of Christian society, takes its rise.

It becomes therefore obligatory for me, Christian People, in the discharge of my Ministry, to work either for your preservation or your rescue from this offence and scandal, which is constantly spreading, and infecting soul after soul with its venom.

It is of the highest importance that I should arouse your faith, and once aroused, that I should strengthen it ; placing some weapons also in your own hands for its defence.

The very foundations of our Religious Belief are jeopardized ; for that belief is founded upon the Cross, and upon the humiliations undergone by Jesus Christ.

The incalculable importance of my theme calls for all the earnestness I can command, and all the attention that you can bestow ; after we have invoked the aid of Heaven, through the intercession of Mary, saying, " *Hail, Mary,* etc." *

WHO would have thought it? That Jesus Christ, predestined of God to be the Redeemer of the world, should become an offence unto the very world He came to save ? Yet it is only too

* May be omitted if read aloud.

true, Christian People, and it is the anomaly I am about to deal with.

In order that you may take in my plan, I will first advance two propositions which shall serve me for the division of this discourse, and which will at the same time help you to see at a glance the mischief as well as the misfortune of the scandal discovered by us in the humiliation of a Divine Saviour, and in His Cross.

For I maintain that if we consider this scandal with regard to its cause and in its *Godward* aspect, there can be nothing less justifiable or more injurious; and I add that if we consider its tendency and its consequences with regard to *man*, there can be nothing more fatal, or more pernicious.

A couple of verities, My Dear Hearers, which I have undertaken to deal with to-day, and to convince you of; which will not be difficult. Truths they are which should produce a most powerful impression on your minds; for little as you may be able to understand who or what God is, yet you will easily form an estimate of man's unfairness who with unwarrantable boldness is ready to intrude himself into the counsels of Divine Wisdom, and who, while possessing in the humiliations of the Cross of his Saviour the most powerful of all possible motives for joining himself inseparably to Him, employs them on the contrary as an excuse for separating from Him and abandoning Him altogether!

Nor is that all: for so little alive are you to your highest interest, which is your own salvation, that you expose it to the terrible dangers that threaten you in this scandal which I am attacking, and which I want to teach you to be on your guard against.

I do not forget that I am addressing a Christian Audience, but even among the most Christian of audiences there are those whose faith is feeble and vacillating. There are those, too, who delight to argue about these details of religion, and upon whom the only effect produced by all this arguing is to land them in perplexity. There are others also who, Christian in appearance, are unbelieving and ungodly at heart. Thus you perceive how this subject suits all and sundry.

So, to resume and sum up in a couple of words, we have:

I. God offended at man's finding a cause for scandal in the humiliation of the Cross of Jesus Christ. There you have the FIRST PART.

II. Man lost by reason of this same scandal which he sees in the humiliation of the Cross of Jesus Christ. That will form the SECOND.

Your attention, please, while we proceed to the consideration of them both.

The subject is one specially suited to the

times in which we live, because they are times devoted to pleasure and amusement, when Society appears to reserve all her insults for the Gospel, while the ungodly are pleased to treat the Mysteries of God with ever deepening scorn, in order that they may claim a right to reject the demands of its strait and lofty Code of Morals; of which those Divine Mysteries form the immutable and immovable foundation.

With this study we will proceed, then, next time we meet.

Sexagesima

PART I

THE SCANDAL OF THE CROSS: AN INSULT TO GOD

PART I

AN INSULT TO GOD*

I HAVE already said, and I here repeat it as my First Proposition—the truth of which you will readily perceive—that to take offence at the Christian Religion, and to lose faith in it, because it is founded upon the shame of the Cross and the humiliation of Jesus Christ, is to *give* offence as well as to *take* it. It is to offend God in the most obnoxious manner. And if you ask why, I answer: Because this taking of offence (1) clashes directly with God's greatness. (2) It inflicts a wound on His loving-kindness. (3) It reflects upon His Wisdom.

Three "Reasons" to which I shall limit my view, and which I purpose to develop and work out with you.

(1) Speaking generally, Christian People, to censure God's action and His providential dealing in no matter what particular, is to attack Him in His Very central Self and Being.

Were God to do certain things which should

* Repeat text: S. Luke xviii. 31.

appear contrary to our reason, it would become our duty, so soon as Faith with all her lights had ascertained the fact, to condemn our reason as blind and rash; not for our reason to find fault with what God has been pleased to do.

"Come, Brethren!" exclaims Saint Augustine, "will you not allow God just the one tiny prerogative of being able to do one or two things that we cannot understand? *Demus Deum aliquid posse, quod nos fateamur investigare non posse.*"

It can scarcely be called an extravagant demand to make on His behalf; yet it is, nevertheless, what we are habitually disposed to deny Him. For we censure everything that God does, which happens not to fall in with our private judgment; while our only cause for all this fault-finding is our own mental incapacity: "*And they understood none of these things.*"

Now, if that be true generally with regard to all God's works, much more so is it with regard to the Supreme Work of Man's Redemption: that work which is, according to the Prophet, especially God's own: that work which is the Sum of all His Marvels, the End of all His Counsels, and the Master-Piece of His Grace: that Work in which, through apparent failure and the deepest degradation, He has made the brightest beams of His Glory to blaze forth! That work of which He was not merely the

Originator and Doer, but of which, while hanging on the Cross, He was also the Material that was being worked upon—Workman and Work in one. Now, is it not shameful that man should take upon himself to question and discuss so great a Mystery? And, that in feeling shocked and scandalized at it, he should be scandalized and shocked at God Himself!

Such, notwithstanding, My Dear Hearers, is the confusion and disorder into which we fall, and which seems to me very much like that with which the Fathers of the Church used to reproach the Heathen of their own day.

You remember the abuse which characterized the conduct of the pagans of ancient Rome with regard to their Religious practice.

Tertullian has noted it in his "Apology." It was this—

"The Romans," says he, "with their insufferable pride, instead of subjecting themselves to the authority of their gods, constituted themselves the judges and censors of their deities. The question used to be discussed in full Senate, whether, for instance, such and such a god should or should not be admitted to the Capitol; and the proposed god would be accepted or rejected according to the preponderance of public taste or prejudice on one side or the other. If he happened to take the fancy of his judges, then he passed into the

number of recognized divinities, but if he lacked the influential support of this jury of his possible future worshippers, he was left out in the cold. Thus," adds Tertullian, "if these gods *in posse* failed to satisfy a Board of human Examiners, they were not to be reckoned as gods at all: *Nisi homini deus placuerit deus non erit!*"

Do we not reach the outer darkness here of human reason?

But, Christian People, allow me to say that this darkness still prevails in the world; and what is much to be lamented is that it is no longer among pagans that it now holds sway, but in the very heart of Christendom itself! Men are to be found in Christian communities whose God, if I may say so, does not suit them. They are not pleased at His having made Himself what He did, or at His being what He is. He made Himself Man. That shocks them. And having become Man He was pleased to extinguish Himself and to suffer. Whereas, they could have wished that He had come among them in pomp and circumstance; so that, were it in their power to reform Him, they would make another God of Him altogether! For here we have the opinions, or rather the conceit of those who pose as the progressive spirits of the age, Society's Free-lances, that is to say; her sensualists, her men of ambitious mind—and

not the one sex only, but the women as well as the men who move and mix in the world of Fashion.

How many of this sort do we not meet with even among the women of our day, who are so besotted from sensual self-surrender, so giddy with whirling in mental vacuum, as to have brought themselves to such a pass as this!

"Really, my Brethren," exclaims Saint Hilary, "we must have pushed our self-conceit and arrogance to their utmost limit and capacity; for I believe that, did we possess the power, we should be mounting up to heaven: regulating the stars in their courses; re-arranging the solar system, and having a meddlesome finger in every process conducted by Mother Nature throughout her wide laboratory of land and sea and sky and air. *Si liceret, et corpora et manus in cœlum levaremus.*"

Thus does this Great Bishop deliver himself. Yet, what it is impossible for our bodies to do, kept down as they are by their weight to the surface of this material globe—*that* our *minds* essay and carry!

For they mount not only up to heaven, but beyond, and not content with trying their mettle on the Lord's handiwork, they court an encounter with the Lord Himself: discussing His Mysteries, finding fault and offence in the lowly and obscure condition to which He brought Himself for our poor sake!

And now I will at once confess that Marcion,* an heresiarch of the most pronounced order as regards this fact of the humiliation of the Son of God, meets us with a retort which is specious and plausible enough. For, says he, if I take offence at the humiliation of this God-become-Man, I do so in the interests and for the credit of God Himself. To me it is intolerable that His Majesty should be thus cheapened and dragged down to the level of the cross; so, my taking offence should not be condemned, seeing that it arises from a loyal zeal for God's honour.

"A zeal," replies Tertullian, "truly phenomenal! A phantom, a falsehood, and a sham! Do you actually mean to tell us that God has appointed you the guardian of His Godhead? Do you imagine that God could not get on without this zeal of yours, or in default of the pains you are good enough to give yourself in looking after His Glory!

"No, No, Marcion!" pursues this stout defender of the sufferings and self-suppression of the Word of God, "it is not for you to come forward with any such arguments as these. It is for you, rather to recognize and to acknowledge your God in no matter what circumstances or under whatever conditions He is pleased to make Himself known: whether in the Manger

* Marcion of Pontus. See Milman's "History of Christianity," vol. ii. chap. viii.

or on Tabor's crown: whether suffering the effacement and eclipse of death or seated on the Throne of His Glory. He is just as much God in the one case as in the other; just as great therefore in the one case as in the other. It is a mistake, then, on your part to assert, as you do, that in suffering He ceases to be God; for God can never, like the sun, run any risk of reeling from the day, or of degenerating by so much as a hair's breadth, from his topmost pitch?"

And I say the same thing to you, O Christian People, now. It is not for you to speculate about your Saviour's humiliations, and the low tract He trod in dying on a cross. But it is for you to worship Him even in His humiliation, ay! as He hangs upon the cross! for indeed His humiliation is a right wonderful and worshipful humiliation; while as for the cross, far from having brought dishonour or disgrace upon His divine person, it has borrowed from its contact with His divine personality a worth and dignity that has won our reverence and awe.

It is for you, I repeat, to render Him your worship and to show your reverent appreciation of the Revelation He has vouchsafed us. For, as Saint Ambrose said, when writing to the Emperor Valentinian: "Whom should I believe about God if I do not believe what God says

about himself? *Cui enim magis de Deo quàm Deo credam.*"

My God tells me He was born into this world a Babe. Good! Then as a Babe He shall have my worship. My God informs me that He suffered on a cross. Well! Although He may seem to me somewhat less of a God hung on a cross, than when seated on the Throne of Heaven, still I shall hold that Cross no less holy and reverend than I do Heaven. Nay, more than that, I shall take greater pleasure in adoring Him Crucified than in adoring Him Glorified; because in adoring Him crucified I shall be offering Him a larger sacrifice of my reason than when I adore Him seated at the right hand of His Father, and attended by ten thousand times ten thousand of His Saints.

Such is the line of argument which beseems a Christian; and if we cannot and do not think after this pattern, I say that it is a scandal and an offence directly obnoxious to God's greatness: adding, however, that it is still more wounding to His Love.

(2) Another outrage which presents itself to my mind, and which should be immediately observed and acknowledged, I put as follows: Is it not astounding, that where we take offence is just where the loving-kindness of our God is most apparent; and that it should be His

infinite, His incomprehensible goodness towards us that sets us against Him.

What is it, for instance, that repels us in the Religion we profess, or of which we ought to be the professors? Just those particulars in which God shows most clearly the love He bears towards us: all those mysteries, in fact, of a God who was made Man, of a God whom man looked down upon, of a God whom men watched dying, against whom they shut their doors as against the setting sun—mysteries which may be all summed in this one saying:—

SIC DEUS DILEXIT MUNDUM.*

So—God loved the world. *So!* A God Undone by Goodness!

> Is yon despised and ruinous man my Lord?
> Full of decay and failing? O monument
> And wonder of good deeds evilly bestowed! †

Were men guided in the least degree by Reason, finding these Mysteries to be of so great advantage to themselves, and so brimming over with Love, they would accept with joy every morsel of evidence which might serve to convince them of their truth; and seeing that Faith furnishes them with testimony of all but

* These words are inscribed above the Crucifixion in the Reredos of Saint Paul's Cathedral, London.

† *Timon of Athens*, Act iv. sc. iii.

coercive force, they should profit by this same faith; for no sweeter satisfaction will men ever taste than that of founding themselves firmly upon this belief.

But what does man do instead? Carried away by his exaggerated self-conceit and his impatience of restraint, he stands out against this Faith; and never having seriously examined whether what it prepares for his acceptance be true or not, he takes offence at the outset and will hear no further.

Instead of saying: "I see in these Mysteries certain great benefactions which place me in my God's debt;" he says: "It is incredible that God could so trouble Himself about me;" and so, instead of living henceforward with Jesus Christ his Redeemer in the just and equitable relationship of reciprocal love, fidelity, and reverence, he goes on in his old hardness of heart and showing monstrous ingratitude with regard to the whole subject of his redemption.

Now, why is this?

Simply because the means employed for his salvation by Our Lord Jesus Christ are not to his taste and do not adapt themselves to his way of thinking: an anomaly deplored by Pope Gregory in these striking words from his Homily on the Holy Gospel: *inde homo adversus salvationem scandalum sumpsit, unde ei magis debitor esse debuit.* Man, instead of acknowledging himself

God's debtor, takes offence at His dealings, and becomes an obstacle to his own salvation.

Brethren! Brethren! What a turning upside down of things have we here!

Man finds a cause of offence and complaint against his God in the very circumstances which should have bound him to that God with the chains of inviolable attachment.

For it is clear that if there could be one thing more than another capable of attaching our affections inseparably to God and of inspiring us with enthusiasm for Him, it should be this thought: "God *died* for *me!* He made Himself Nobody—Nothing—for my sake!"

Look at the extraordinary fruits of grace that this thought has caused to round and ripen in the Saints! What miracles of virtue! What abandonment of the world! What fervour of repentance! What self-sacrifice! What Blood of Martyrs!

Now, whence sprang all this? In what lay its inspiration?

In the sight of a God made Man, and who was offered up for man's sake.

That was what won their hearts, what charmed and bewitched them, what set them beside themselves.

Yet what do we find, Christian People? Why, that it is just this that offends us, and that the offence thus taken involves us in a loose, impure,

disordered life: in a life which renders God neither fruit nor increase, passed as it is out in the dark and cold, away from the genial sunshine of His Presence.

In order to heal the soreness of our offended sensibility, or to commend this belief to the reluctant acceptance of our judgment, ought we to demand anything more than this simple reflection: This belief means my sanctification, whereas this scandal means my moral and spiritual undoing? To believe in a God who died binds me to the practice of all the virtues. To be scandalized at a God who died plunges me into the mire and misery of sin.

Should not that one consideration suffice to put an end to all scandal and offence whatever, taken either by my reason or my fancy concerning the facts of our Religion?

"Look here, Brethren!" cries Tertullian; "once more I adjure you not to feel scandalized at what has proved the essential and efficient cause of your own happiness and good fortune! Be offended if you will"—I am giving you the personal feelings and opinions of this Great Genius—"Be offended if you will at all the rest; but do, at any rate, spare the Person of Your Saviour! Spare His Cross! That anchor of the world! *Parce obsecro, parce huic spei totius orbis!*

"If we were to see Angels scandalized and

offended, that would be more tolerable. Jesus the Christ never suffered for Angels. But that it should be you! You, for whose sake the Saviour came upon earth, you for whose sake He was content to die ! That is a scandal fit to rouse against you every creature of His Hand ! And do not dare to tell me that the cross is a disgrace to God ; seeing that it has been the instrument of your salvation ; for the moment it becomes the instrument of your salvation, it becomes an honour to God ; for nothing is more honourable to God than to have accomplished the salvation of Man. *Nihil tam dignus Deo quàm hominis salus.*

" Never let me hear you say that death is an indignity to which a God should not have been exposed ; for this indignity of death, as you are pleased to call it, has been the healing of your every ailment and the sacrament by which your reconciliation has been sealed. *Totum dei mei dedecus, sacramentum fuit meæ salutis.*"

I should have to be thoroughly hardened and graceless before I could feel scorn for an indignity so profitable and so precious ; an indignity so worthy, therefore, of my reverence and of my love ! Yet there do exist men so constituted. All God's goodness and loving-kindness fails to affect them or to touch their hearts except on the condition that it be accompanied by His Justice, or their caricature of it.

They demand to be loved not too well but *wisely*—according, that is, to their own interpretation of this adverb.

But since He has loved them otherwise, they are resolved to feel themselves aggrieved and offended at His having loved them at all! For with their advanced ideas and views they reckon this Mystery of Humiliation and Extinction, upon which the foundations of Christianity repose, as "foolishness." *

(3) While *I* maintain that *this* Mystery is the Mystery of God's Wisdom, and that the scandal they make out of it is, in its inherent meanness, the more insulting to God because it tells against His deliberate action and is contrary to all the most admirable dictates of His Wisdom.

For what is the sum and substance of this scandal which the procedure of Jesus Christ in the Redemption of the world presents to these so-called and self-styled Progressive Spirits of the Age?

They find it impossible to believe that a God could have ever thus abased and degraded Himself. But I, for my part, do emphatically assert that, in His character of Saviour, nothing could have become Him better.

Do you ask why?

Because He was here upon earth solely for the purpose of rendering satisfaction to God on

* "Unto the Greeks foolishness," 1 Cor. i. 23.

behalf of man. Now, to render satisfaction for an offence committed, carries, in the very notion of it, the humiliation and abasement of him on whom the task devolves. And this is quite in accordance with the natural ordering of things.

Yet they cannot stomach the idea that the Son of God should have proclaimed as the basis of His Religious precepts so spartan a self-loathing, self-discipline, and self-correction.

But seeing that He was come to establish a Religion in accepting which men were expected to acknowledge themselves to be vile earth and miserable sinners, should He, could He, have found any other basis? What, for instance, suits sin better than repentance? What sits so well upon the penitent as rigorous and remorseless treatment of his own guilty person? Would not mere common sense dictate the adoption of some such measures as these?

They are amazed that Jesus who is the Christ should have canonized poverty by admitting it to the list of the Beatitudes, that He should have held out His Cross as an inducement to follow Him, and that He should have raised the love of being despised and rejected of men above all earthly honour.

While I, for my part, admire the depth of His Wisdom in all that. For, seeing that it was a question of saving the world by reforming it, what better could He have done than to combat

its greed, its sensuality, and its pride: those evils that were crying loudest for Reform?

But was it necessary that the Physician of Souls should Himself taste the medicine that was needed to heal our sickness? Yes, Christian People, it was inevitable; to the end that His example might induce us to use these remedies ourselves. For without that, without this example of His which renders them more familiar and less distasteful, should we ever have been able to swallow the bitter draught? If He had taken the sweets for Himself and left us the Cross, what should we have thought of such a partition as that? Intending as He did to honour humility and poverty which the world had such a horror of, what plan could He have adopted that would have proved more successful than the one He did adopt: namely, the hallowing of them both in His own Person; "so that," as Saint Augustine says so well, "man's humility, which is of itself a poor and weak affair, might find support and countenance in the humility of God, as well as a stay and a defence against the assaults of Pride: *ut saluberrima humilitas humana contra insultantem sibi superbiam, divina humilitas patrocinio fulciretur?*"

But you will tell me that, after all, those who make these Christian maxims *their own* are but a scanty few. It is no question at all of few or many. It is a question of the design which

Jesus the Christ had in propounding these maxims to the world. If they be few that practice or profit by them, one may add further that they be few also who are Chosen, few Predestinate; and that it is in nowise necessary for either to be more numerous; since, in order to establish and vindicate the decrees of God, it is enough that there should be found as many sects or individuals *professing* to observe these decrees, as we might desire to see of the Chosen, and of those whose Home awaits them in the Heavens.

"Be that as it may," resumes Saint Augustine, "such was the procedure, such the action of the Son of God.

"He has made of His Cross a means for the correction of our depraved and faulty behaviour. But, seeing that such means had been hitherto unheard of, the world became offended. He, therefore, produced, by way of credential, the circumstantial evidence of miracles. By the persuasive force of miracles He won the faith of the people. With this popular faith He gathered a numerous Church. In the expansion of this Church He has appropriated the testimony of tradition and of history. Thus, therefore, He established His Religion, and after such a sort that neither Heathen nor Heretics have ever been able to shake it. *Miraculis conciliavit auctoritatem, auctoritate meruit fidem, fide*

enutrivit multitudinem, multitudine obtinuit vetustatem, vetustate roboravit religionem."

It is in his Book on the Utility of Truth that this Holy Doctor makes these remarks.

But would you really know why we are offended at the Cross of our God? *It is simply because that Cross is to be the remedy for our moral and spiritual disorder.* That is what hurts us. We will have none of this remedy. We find ourselves very comfortable in spite of our malady, and, very far from wanting to be cured of it, our sole object is to keep it going and to increase its malignity.

The Son of God came to tell us that we must have done with it; and it is that which has offended us. Had He told us something quite different we should have listened to Him. Had He brought us a series of Pagan Legends we should have accepted them. But since He has revealed certain Mysteries which involve the reformation of our life and manners, together with the renunciation of all sinful lusts and passions, there we are in open rebellion, just like those fanatics who assault the very Officials sent by the Charitable to improve the sanitary condition of their houses. For in the same way Our Most Adorable God has become an object of aversion to the high and mighty, because in humbling Himself He poured contempt on all their pride. And as if it were not enough for

man to be ill, he must needs plume himself upon his sickness, taking it very much amiss that any one should interfere, with the object of making him well again!

For me to talk to some big man of the world about a Child-God, a God who lay cradled in a manger, is to put him out. Not because of any apparent or inherent difficulty presented by the Mystery in itself, for most likely he would never give it a thought or take the trouble to inquire into it; but because the Mystery means the condemnation of all his ambitious aims and of all the unrighteous and criminal plans he has set on foot for the aggrandizement of his position in society.

Let me confront some Lady of Fashion with the picture of a God who is in pain, and whose body is covered with wounds, and she will turn away in horror and disgust; not because of any impossibility or incongruity she discovers in the picture, for she is conscious of no such thing; but rather because a God in such a plight is glaringly inconsistent with her life of ease and luxury, her dainty likes and dislikes, her self-indulgence and all the pains she takes to make herself so comfortable.

For proof of what I am saying, let me talk either to the one or to the other of God in Three Persons—a Mystery far more incomprehensible than that of a God who humbled Himself—and

neither will feel in the least degree scandalized thereat. And why not? Because the Mystery of a Triune God does not level its aim directly at the ambition of the one or the worldliness of the other.

For the real source of our offence and scandal, then, we have but to look within. We need search no otherwhere than in our vices, our sinful appetites, our moral disorders. There, too, we may find a test for determining the nature of this offence, since it has no other cause but our own depravity: waxing and waning as it does with the pulse of our spiritual health.

Ah, Lord, I am no longer surprised that the world should have so stoutly withstood Thy Law, or that it should have been so commonly opposed to Thy most admirable plans. Having reached its present pitch of lawlessness, the world was bound inevitably to treat Thee after this sort; and I should have been much surprised had it not felt scandalized at Thy decrees, and had it not shown its offence by following principles directly contradictory.

This scandal is but a proof, Lord, of its own wickedness and of Thy Holiness. Wert Thou less Holy, or were it less wicked, the world would never have been offended in Thee; but given *Thy* Holiness and *its own* disorder, it cannot do otherwise than take offence.

So, you see, My Beloved Hearers, how

obnoxious this Scandal at the abasement of Jesus Christ and at His death upon a cross must be to God.

I shall now proceed to show you that it is no less hurtful to Men, especially to all such as call themselves Christians.

And that shall form the SECOND PART.

Quinquagesima

PART II

THE SCANDAL OF THE CROSS: THE PERDITION OF MAN

PART II

THE PERDITION OF MAN *

TAKING things in their ordinary Providential arrangement and sequence, we may say, and truly, that, whether we consider Man's Redemption in its design or as an accomplished fact, we find that the cause of reprobation in the case of almost every lost soul has been offence taken at the humiliation and Crucifixion of the Son of God.

Here, indeed, if we may believe Saint Chrysostom, is to be found the cause of the Apostasy of the Angels themselves. From the moment, he tells us, that God created these Celestial Spirits, He revealed to them the Great Mystery of human Redemption and Salvation, which should one day be accomplished in the Person of His Son, and that He commanded them to worship this fore-ordained Redeemer : *Adorent eum omnes Angeli Dei.* †

* Repeat Text. S. Luke xviii. 31 (Holy Gospel).

† "And let all the Angels of God worship him."—Ps. xcvii. 7 ; Heb. i. 6.

Some obeyed the order with loyal alacrity. These, he says, were the Angels Predestinate. But the pride of certain others took offence thereat, and, to punish their disobedience, God cast them into the Eternal Abyss.

An echo of this idea is heard in the following address put into the mouth of Lucifer, whom "Messiah singled out as His Vicegerent over all the earth."

> "Brothers, I praise you and your faithfulness:
> No meagre proof of true humility
> For Thee, Archangel Gabriel, Thee of all
> Heaven's principalities among the first,
> Here set to guard this latest work of God,
> This freak, this marvel of Omnipotence.
> Yes, we are to believe this worm o' the earth,
> A spark may be of immortality
> Enshrined within a mortal coil of flesh,
> Made of the clay we stamp beneath our feet,
> Equal to us the first-born sons of light;
> Nay, more than equal, that through him at last
> Beatitude shall flow to us, and man
> Exalted to the everlasting throne,
> The Bride, so spake Messiah, of Himself,
> Shall see the peerless potentates of heaven
> Standing far off in circles infinite,
> Or prostrate at her Bridegroom's footstool. Sure,
> If lowliness, as we have often heard,
> Be measured by the depth that we descend,
> This crowns that coy and virgin grace with praise!"*

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* *Yesterday, To-day, and For Ever.* Book v. line 74 *se.* Bishop Bickersteth.

The Church in the Middle-Ages was divided into two Schools of Thought, the Thomists and the Scotists, the former holding

That, too, in the opinion of all the Fathers, caused the reprobation of the Jews. The Jews were expecting a Messiah, rich, powerful, magnificent; a Man sent from God for the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel by the might of conquest; whence they looked for endless eras of an unbounded prosperity.

But when they saw Jesus the Messiah in His dire lack of everything—powerless, not known, and of no importance—when they saw Him condemned to suffer death, even the death of the cross, they were offended at Him. This offence of theirs landed them in unbelief. Their unbelief led to hardness of heart. Their hardness of heart roused the anger of God, who gave them up. This giving of them up involved the destruction of their City, the profanation of their Temple, and their national ruin.

"That," again says Saint Jerome—and our own experience confirms the truth of his assertion—"that," says he, "is what renders the pagans and the heathen intractable and indisposed to accept the light of the Gospel, when we proclaim in their hearing our Holy Law.* If they could overcome this feeling of offence at the doctrine

that the Incarnation was specially devised in view of the Fall; the other that it was preordained. The latter is the truer and more scriptural view.

* "Take from them . . . contempt of Thy Word." (Collect for Good Friday.)

of a God who was crucified, they would at once become believers like ourselves. Yet, because their minds are thus preoccupied and prejudiced, they remain in the darkness of Idolatry and the bondage of Hell."

But, leaving Jew and Pagan alone, let us look to our own case. We are dealing with the most subtle temptation that the worldly-minded Christian of our day has to guard against; the very one, however, with regard to which he is commonly the least watchful.

A circumstance which evidently exposes him to a still greater risk of perdition. And if you inquire why that should be, I can give you three weighty reasons, which I beg of you to meditate upon and to fix well beforehand in your minds.

Because then, the scandal at the humiliation and the Cross of God is essentially antagonistic to that profession of Faith which should be made by every Christian man. That is the First.

Because this scandal presents a constant obstacle to the performance of all the duties and the religious exercises expected from a Christian. That is the Second.

And because this scandal forms the common principle underlying the sundry irregularities which mar our Christian life. That is the Third.

Had I, O God, but the zeal of Thine Apostle, that so I might treat these great and pressing truths as worthily and as forcibly as he did!

1. I maintain, then, that this temptation—this scandal—is essentially antagonistic to that profession of his faith which every Christian man is bound to make. Here, moreover, is the proof which is unanswerable. For the Christian's Religious Belief, and the profession which he ought to make of it, should carry him the length of glorying in the humiliations and sufferings of Jesus Christ. It is not enough for me that I believe them. I must say with Saint Paul: *Absit mihi gloriari, nisi in cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi.** "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Short of that there is no salvation for me; since God, says Saint Augustine, has nailed my Salvation to the cross of His Son. Not to that cross as an object of scorn, repulsion, and horror; but to that Cross, approached with the whole-hearted submission of Faith, and clasped with the affection of fervent Charity. For, as a matter of fact, adds the same Holy Doctor, since it is the Cross that is to save me, it is but just that I should make up my mind to hope in that Cross, and to make it my boast. But where is this my boasting, while I inwardly am conscious of offence and scandal?

* Galatians vi. 14.

Moreover, in speaking of Our Saviour's Cross, I do not mean that outward and visible cross which was the instrument of His torture, and of which we see the material representation upon our Altars ; for it may well happen that, through our familiarity with religious ornaments and symbols, and owing to the numbing effect of custom, we can honour that external Cross without any sense of scandal whatsoever.

But the Cross I mean is the inner one, on which the Son of God was tortured in heart and soul ; whose pangs we likewise daily share in the injuries, the misfortunes, the disappointments and humiliations of our earthly life ; as well as in the loss and damage of our worldly estate, the insults we are called upon to bear, and the persecution set on foot against us.

For all that is exactly what is meant by "The Cross," both in the language of the Gospels and in the writings of Saint Paul. If, too, our Profession of Faith be full and thorough, then it follows, by an imperious necessity, that it will mean for us the admiration, the love of all those thorny providences. I do not say that we shall love them with any warm or passionate affection, but with a very real wholesome liking,

How, once more, are we to accommodate such liking with the scandal that I am now combating ?

For, My Dear Hearers, when I see people

prostrating their bodies before the cross in stone or metal—without judging rashly—I feel persuaded that the most part do so as a piece of the merest formality, whereas God would have them do it without either hypocrisy or conventionality. For all the while that they thus adore the Cross in effigy they feel for the true spiritual Cross a distaste and disaffection which stultify and nullify their outward act of reverence; an act which we cannot accept as a religious expression or declaration of faith, unless it be accompanied by some secret obeisance of the self or a godly inclination of the will.

And all that Saint Augustine has so forcibly said in exaltation of the Cross, as to its having had the power of raising itself from the shameful level of an instrument of torture to glitter upon the Crown of Emperors,* is but so much bombast, if, when signed upon imperial brows, it sink not, at the same time, into the depths of faithful hearts!

Now, it is impossible for its impression to become fixed upon our hearts, so long as this aversion to humiliation and suffering reigns therein; for there is nothing less compatible with love and respect for the Cross than this dislike of those personal crosses which God provides for us to bear.†

* *A locis suppliciorum ad frontes imperatorum.*

† It is much easier to wear the cross than it is to bear it.

Whence I conclude that this is a scandal which goes the length of destroying our faith.

2. From this it follows (and this is the Second of my Three Reasons, which is a corollary of the first, presenting it in a new light) that in this Scandal thus exhibited, we experience a permanent obstacle to the performance of all the duties and obligations of a professed Christian: a fact which, as far as I can see, is incontestable. For the whole activity of our Christian Life tends, according to the outline given us in the Gospels, to produce in us a hatred of self, crucifixion of the Flesh, abasement of pride, moderation in amusement, and renunciation of selfish motives and interests; without which, of course, it is impossible for us to satisfy the exacting demands of our Religion. Yet all this is just what the offence taken by us at the Cross of the Son of God thwarts and hinders.

If, for instance, it be a question of stifling resentment felt on account of some injury, and of leaving vengeance to God? Then this scandal at the Cross takes hold of us, whispering that this duty of forbearance, judged by worldly standards, is a piece of folly not to be contemplated for one moment: and that it is quite fair to stand up for our rights: that I must safeguard my rank: that a man's honour is an inalienable possession, to waver in the defence of which is to forfeit it altogether.

Could I but sympathize sincerely and reverently with the forbearance practised by my Saviour while suffering on the Cross, my line of argument and of action would be utterly changed. I should accept injuries without emotion. I should forget them without an effort: I should pardon them with pleasure. I should render good for evil, and think myself happy when giving way to others.

Now, why should I do and be all this? Because I should be preoccupied and possessed by the reflection that such conduct is honourable on my part, since God has already set me the example of it. While, on the other hand, if I am full of offence at what my God has done—then you will find me sore and touchy, hard as flint, unpardoning and unpitying towards my enemies. I can no more love them than I can bear the sight of them; for there is no longer any influence at work to make me want to be at one with them again, or which might facilitate any such return.

In the same way, should I have to overcome my sensitiveness as to what the world will say, with its readiness always to hinder me from rendering to God what is His due; this offence I have taken at the degradation of the Cross will not fail to afford me any number of excuses to make me hesitate; secretly suggesting that, after all, one must do as the rest of the world

does; that one's religion should be shaped to suit one's surroundings; that one must avoid the appearance of being singular or exceptional; that God knows the desire of my heart; and that one is not called upon to make one's self the talk of the town or to become a public laughing-stock.

But if I were not offended in Jesus Christ, neither should I be offended at the insults and mockeries of which He was the object, and not being offended at His, neither should I be offended at my own. I should take them patiently, it may be, joyfully. How could I feel annoyed all the while I am saying to myself, "Yes, of course, they will laugh at me. They will have no patience with me when they see me busied with my religious exercises, when they note my regular attendance at the Sacrament of the Altar, or my frequent approach to the Holy Table"?

Well, if they choose to act like that, I shall bless God for it! I shall take it as an honour to suffer a little ridicule, when I think of His having been covered with shame and ignominy for me! That is what I should say, and that is how I should behave in all such encounters, and when my duty as a Christian was called in question.

But if, on the contrary, I take offence at Jesus the Christ and at His Cross; then, from that

out, I shall never face any attack. I shall give in to the slightest pressure of public opinion. I shall blush over my duty, and give the lie to my profession. There will be no extreme to which, in some evil moment, I may not drift; no irregularities into which I may not fall.

For this Scandal, My Dear Hearers, whose sad consequences I am now laying before you, is, in fact, the common principle underlying all the particular disorders of Christian Society: my *Third* and *Last* Reason.

3. Are there Christians greedy and grasping? Then it is because there are Christians scandalized at the poverty of Jesus Christ. Are there Christians pursued and spurred on by ambition? It is because there are Christians scandalized by the humility of Jesus Christ. Are there Christians sunk in pleasure and slaves to sensuality? It is because there are Christians scandalized at the life of austerity and mortification led by Jesus Christ; and so with others.

Rid Christendom of this feeling of scandal and you will rid it of all the vices, while at the same time you open its doors to every virtue. I know very well, of course, that any Christian may now and then give way to some impulse of greed, of ambition, or of impurity; and yet, notwithstanding, he will honour, all the while, in the Person of his Saviour, the contrary

virtues. Those are cases of sudden temptation and of momentary stumbling.

But for a Christian habitually to yield to such impulses until they have become a second nature, and still remain unscandalized by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ; for him to become a confirmed sensualist, for instance, without being offended at the Cross of Jesus; for him to acquire a fixed character for pride and worldliness without feeling offended at the humility of Jesus Christ—that is exactly what does never happen.

In such a Christian there must dwell a confirmed Tendency that will pervert his faith and corrupt his manners; which tendency is but another name for the scandal of which I now am speaking.

So that we find ourselves agreeing with the Son of God, that, Blessed is he who is not offended in the Author of his Salvation! And by the converse rule, Woe unto that man for whom the life and work of his Saviour present a subject of offence!

For this offence which we take at what our God does and at what He is, can do Him no harm whatever. It only hurts ourselves. He is too independent, this Great and Glorious God, both of us and of our opinions, to be damaged thereby. We can scandalize ourselves as much as ever we like at His doctrine and at

His Religion. His doctrine will stand in spite of us, and His religion win the day! It has triumphed already over the scandal of the Jew and that of the Gentile. It has triumphed over the scandal of wise men after the flesh as well as over that of the simple ; over the offence of the learned and over that of the know-nothing ; the scandal of kings and the scandal of peoples ; the scandal of the whole world! Will it find any greater difficulty, think you, in triumphing over ours ?

If this offence, therefore, be hurtful, it can be so only to ourselves ; and it can be so for ourselves only because it makes us an offence unto God.

For this, My Dear Hearers, is what happens. We take offence at our God, and He takes offence at us. But with this essential difference. The offence we take is absolutely unjustifiable. The offence He takes is perfectly just. For we can find in Him no real cause of offence at all, whereas, when we allow ourselves to be offended with Him, can we lack any one characteristic that is calculated to provoke in Him the fulness of His wrath ? Wherefore this offence, thus taken by God, should count as one of the greatest of all possible evils, since it involves our reprobation — special, positive, emphatic !

And now, O God, I turn to Thee, beseeching

Thee to accept my prayer on behalf of all that hear me. It is but a small favour that I ask at Thy hands; yet one the which if Thou wilt grant me, I shall hope great things, nay, everything, of these my Christian Hearers. Forsake us not, O Lord! Give us not over to taking offence at what Thou hast done for us, or at the divine teaching Thou hast vouchsafed us! Too well we know that the lawlessness of this age does tend to make us that way inclined. O Lord, be Thou our defence, that we fall not into this infidelity. Grant us, O God, we earnestly beseech Thee, in this our special danger, the succour of Thy Grace. Graft in our hearts the reverence due to Thy humiliation and Thy sufferings; such as constrained Saint Paul to tell of them in language so magnificent, and to make of them his only boast. Thy hand, O Lord, it was that touched the heart of that Apostle, kindling its force and glow. Thy humiliation and Thy Cross, of which he had been, if I may say so much, the persecutor, become the objects of his worship and his message to the world. Grant to us likewise such a measure of Thy Grace that we may adore Thee down to the very dregs of Thy dishonour?

But, Lord, what shall we make of Thee in all Thy splendour and magnificence when Thou art enthroned in Thy Heavenly Dwelling, since

Thy undoing and discomfiture have become so glorious? And what will *they* make of *us*, O Jesu Lord and Saviour! When one day Thou shalt cause the brightness of Thy glory to burst upon our sight! Since even here in Thine abasement we still must worship Thee! *Si opprobrium tuum gloria sit, quid erit gloria tua!*

Grand thoughts, these of Saint Ambrose, My Dear Hearers! And with them I leave you. To have such thoughts ourselves, we have only to be Christians; and in order to be Christians we are bound to have such thoughts. The more fully you enter into these ideas, the more fully do you partake of divine grace and of the Christian spirit; whereas, in proportion as such reflections weaken within you, the weaker, too, becomes the Grace of Christian man- or woman-hood.

Leaving, Dear Hearers, the men and women of this world to run after its pomps and vanities, let us, for our part, hold us fast by the Person of our Beloved Redeemer. During this Holy Season, left unhallowed by the world, let our devotion to Him become more marked. Other refuge have we none. All our hope on Him is stayed. For, out of Him, we are accursed in God's sight. Therefore, let us hold fast His doctrine, follow His example, and perform the duties enjoined by His Religion. Let us regard with horror anything that might turn away our

hearts from Him. We will not be of the number of those unquiet spirits who, open to every passing influence, remain steadfast to none.

Let us serve God with unflinching faith and unfailing constancy; and, that we may acquire this godly firmness, let us plant our feet upon the Rock that is Jesus Christ; not making of this Rock a stone of stumbling or a rock of offence, but taking it rather as the base and the pedestal of our perfection. By these means we shall gain the summit of our beatitude.

Whither may God of His great mercy guide us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

II

THE CHRISTIAN CARNIVAL

BOSSUET

Born at Dijon A.D. 1627. Died A.D. 1704.

THE

CHRISTIAN CARNIVAL*

Cogitavi vias meas et converti pedes meos in testimonia tua.

I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.—Ps. cxix. 59.

* *Carnival* means *Good-bye Meat* (*Vale*, farewell; *Carni*, meat). The Festival ends on Shrove Tuesday before the Lenten Fast, and is commonly a scene of mad frivolity, if not of downright debauchery.

PROLOGUE

THE STRESSFUL OUTLOOK

WHILE unbridled licence holds high revel; while the Devil, hating the Fast which we are about to keep, is trying to blacken these days with the stain of wild debauch, it becomes a wholesome and Godly duty on our part to sanctify them to the best of our power by Public Prayer and by the Reading and Hearing of God's Holy Word. Since men, giving themselves over to brutal enjoyment, seem to forget during this season that they were created in the Image of God, I thought I should be acting in the best interests of your salvation, if, with the Prophet David, I were to set before you to-day the obligations of human life. That is why I have chosen this verse of the One Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm, in which that Great King and still greater Prophet, after having considered what there is to be done in the world, tells us quite openly and without reserve that he has found no better path to follow here below

than that of God's Commandments: "I thought on my ways."

Your undivided attention, if you please, Faithful People, while we consider this all-important subject.

That pre-eminent Servant of God who has left us the words I have just quoted, was obliged from his earliest youth to defend himself against powerful enemies. Often did he find his own interests involved in the dangerous plots of the Great and the Powerful. He was called upon to govern a rapidly growing State on whose throne he had to establish himself in the face of surviving members of the family of Saul his predecessor; in fact, during a reign of considerable length he had to bear not only the annoyance arising out of Court Factions and incessant domestic broils, but to submit to the necessity of waging cruel wars both at home and abroad.

At all events, if you ask him what he thought about the proposition contained in the wise and wonderful words I have chosen for my text, he would not have hesitated to tell you that never had he to deal with business more urgent than that which they express. Since, therefore, we can do nothing of ourselves, the more important the affair is the more need have we of Divine assistance. To the Father of Lights, then, we will go in earnest supplication that of His great

goodness He will fill us with the Illumination of His Holy Spirit.

My point of view in this important study shall be that of an Observer come direct from some unknown and isolated spot, widely separated from the business and society of men—one utterly ignorant of human affairs.

I imagine myself to be lifted suddenly to the summit of some lofty mountain, whence, endowed by special Divine intervention with super-human powers of vision, I can see, spread out before me, all that is going on by land and sea throughout the world.

By the adoption of some similar artifice the Blessed Martyr Cyprian managed to persuade his faithful friend Donatus of the vanity of earthly things.

Standing, therefore, upon this lofty eminence, I see at the first glance, an infinite multitude of peoples and nations with their differences of character, custom, and temperament: *Some* savage and brutal: *Others* refined and highly cultivated; and I ask myself how can I make you realize such a variety of minds and manners? Then, taking this mass of human life and activity more in detail, I endeavour to distinguish the multifarious occupations in which man's hand and brain are so eagerly and energetically engaged. Eternal God! What toil! What ceaseless going to and fro! What

ant-like stir of men and atoms! Movement, commotion, and confusion without interval and without end!

Turning to the towns, I know not where to fix my gaze, so distracting is the diversity of the prospect. Here is a man overheating both blood and brain in a drinking saloon. Here is another immersed in public affairs; and here are the shops in which trickery is brisker than trade. Astonishment takes possession of me as I contemplate this hive of busy workers, armed with

> "Harvest-tool and husbandry,
> Loom and wheel and enginery."

My brain reels with gazing upon such a kaleidoscopic whirl of men and things. Who could believe, unless his eye had seen it, that the human hand and mind could work such wonders of creative and adaptive skill!

And more than this; I notice that the Country is no less busy than the Town. Not a soul has a moment's leisure. Man, woman, child, is up and doing; building, ploughing, digging; some in the fields, others in the garden; this man for his pleasure and pastime, that man in order that he may keep a roof over his head. But even the country, with its myriad activities, must not be allowed to monopolize our attention.

Upon the waters which Nature would seem to have allotted as the portion of winds and waves,

and as the home of fish; there, too, as on the land, Man lives and moves. Across its bosom floating towns, peopled with shifting colonies, dare the storm, risking life and belongings upon the most treacherous of elements, with nothing but a frail plank as a rampart between themselves and destruction.

And what do I see? What, rather, do I not see? For nowhere do Man's energy, audacity, and enterprise appear to greater advantage than in that restless stressful scene.

And still, Faithful People, there remains the long and varied list of all the tastes and inclinations which characterize mankind. Shall I glance through it?

Well, then, *here* you will find men of an active or chivalrous turn whose delight is in muscular exercise, for whose ear there can be no music so sweet as the clash and shock of arms, and who, if obliged by interest or necessity to pass their time in some retired corner, will find an outlet for their love of risk and danger in the mimic warfare of the chase.

There you will come across others of a more tranquil temperament, preferring the peace and quietness favourable to their turn for social intercourse and conversation, or to the fascinating pursuit of letters, or to the following of some engrossing and exclusive hobby: each according to his own peculiar bent and fancy.

Some, I perceive there are, who do nothing but study how to be smart and witty that they may win the applause of some brilliant circle. Here is a man whose whole pleasure is centred in the risks and chances of the gaming table. What should be but a pastime becomes his grim occupation and business. Every day has its *rendezvous*. Play becomes a craze. How fast his pulse is beating is to be seen in the eagerness of his eye and hand. Thus, serious and absorbed, he squanders the best part of his precious time.

These, again, pass their whole lives in planning and plotting. They must be parties to every secret. Officious, occupying themselves about everybody's business, they are always on the lookout for fresh friends and new acquaintances. There is A. tormented by the heat of his foolish affections, while B. is raging with murderous hatred, and C. is being consumed with incurable jealousy.

This man gathers, that man straws. Some are ambitious and seek public place and preferment, while others, more self-sufficient and self-contained, prefer the irresponsible ease and idleness of private life. Each has his own personal predilection and preference. The faces of men do not present any greater variety of feature and expression than is to be found in their doings. Each longs to be foolish in his own particular way. Storm-swept ocean cannot

boast more waves than there arise thoughts out of that secret chamber, that bottomless abyss—the human mind.

Bewildered at the spectacle of such multitudinous variety, I look at home. I study, I examine *myself*, and I ask, what to do? Which way to turn? *Cogitavi vias meas.* I thought upon my ways! One thing, I whispered to myself, is clear enough, and that is, that the other animals seem either to be governed, or else to govern themselves, after a fashion much more uniform than is the case with me. Whence, therefore, comes this irregularity and eccentricity which distinguish the conduct of *human* affairs? Can this be the Divine Animal we have heard so much about? Cannot the vigour of immortality cause this wonderful being to produce something a little less rudimentary, something that shall savour rather more nearly of that heavenly origin whence it drew forth?

All its occupations which I have been able to examine, appear to me to be either mean, or vain, or foolish, or wicked. I find plenty of excitement and distraction to *disturb* the mind; but I can discover no rule or efficient government to keep it in order, or set it at rest. All is "vanity and vexation of spirit," as the wisest of men has said. Is there nothing forthcoming more worthy of a creature made in the Image of God? *Cogitavi vias meas.* I take heed to my ways—I consider

them carefully, I study them, I search them out; and while I am thus puzzling over them I come upon a new Type of Man which God has scattered here and there up and down the world: Men who spend all they have, and all they are, in framing their life upon the Square of God's Law. These are the Righteous, the Godly, whose conduct appears to me to be more consistent, their self-control more thorough, their behaviour better regulated than that of other men; but whose number is so small that they make but very little show. Besides that, I notice that they are not held in very great repute. Their portion appears to be either poverty or scorn; while their oppressors and persecutors carry their heads high amid the applause of all and sundry: a circumstance which lands me in fresh perplexities. Ought I to follow the Majority or the Minority? The Lucky or the Good? Those who are enjoying the praise of men, or those who are content to win the approval of their consciences?

Well, after much hesitation, this is the conclusion I arrive at: Here am I, born in a condition of the blankest ignorance—exposed as a foundling on the Doorstep of the World, without a notion of what I am expected to do here; and what little I have managed to pick up since on the subject is so mixed with every kind of error, that my mind would have remained in an

attitude of perpetual surprise had it been left to its own light.*

But this uncertainty notwithstanding, I am called upon to undertake a long and perilous journey—the Journey of Life—in the course of which I am obliged to follow any number of crooked paths along the edge of precipices, noted for the host of travellers who have slipped from them into the abyss. Blind as I was, what would have become of me had I not had the good fortune to find a Reliable Guide who should direct my erring steps and help my poor soul's halting gait? Such a guide was my first, my indispensable requisite.

But not merely was my mind dark from ignorance, but my will is terribly out of gear, being unable to overcome desires which are either unwholesome or unwarrantable.

I find myself almost constantly agitated by the violence of my passions and the compelling force of their attraction. I must discover some sure and efficient governing principle wherewith to regulate my conduct in accordance with the dictates of sound reason, and to order the fitfulness of my procedure. This is the Second Stay I stand in need of.

And now I come to the Third, which is this—

* "An infant crying in the night,
And with no language but a cry."
In Memoriam.

My understanding and my will, which are the chief factors in determining my conduct, being thus crippled—the one by ignorance, the other by the lack of wise direction—my whole moral equilibrium is thereby upset and falls into the further mischief of endless unrest and utter insobriety. From whim to whim I turn without finding anything to satisfy me; insomuch that I should be condemned to live on without hope of ever seeing the end of my prolonged distresses, did I not find at last a firm foundation that can lend some consistency to my life by imparting steadiness of aim and definiteness of action: some guide, in short, who will rescue me from its errors, some rule to put an end to its disorder, and that will enforce quiet persistent progress, instead of a march made up of advances and retreats.

Here, then, are the three things I seek. And where, O God, shall I find them? *Cogitavi vias meas.* "I thought upon my ways." Human prudence is always risky. Human rules are never adequate. Worldly prosperity is never sure. I must lift up my heart. I see, yes, in God's law, I see an Infallible Chart, an all-sufficient Rule, and a Source of unclouded serenity of mind. I listen to Jesus the Christ, saying, with all His never-failing helpfulness, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."* That Right Way in

* S. John xiv. 6.

following which my steps shall neither err nor stray. The Whole Truth—infallible, invariable—inspirer and regulator of my conduct, the True Life of my soul, breathing unruffled calm upon its troubled sea.

What room for further question? Away, then, with all doubt and perplexity! Away with our wretched irresolution! I have thought on my ways; and at last, O Lord, I have turned my feet unto thy Testimonies!

That is the theme with which we are now busy—a theme embracing, as you see, the duty of each department of human life.

No doubt, Faithful People, you have listened to dissertations much more learned and elaborate than this of mine, wherein conclusion followed premiss with far greater nicety; but I have no hesitation in saying that never Council nor Cabinet, neither Pulpit nor Press, has had to deal with a subject of such vast and vital importance as this which now occupies us.

PART I

THE CHRISTIAN CARNIVAL:

"IF THE BLIND LEAD THE BLIND"

PART I

"IF THE BLIND LEAD THE BLIND"

"WHAT is Man, O Thou Most Mighty, that Thou art so mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou so regardest him?" asked the Prophet David.

What is our life but perpetual error? Our opinions but just so many mistakes? Or our action but the outcome of ignorance and inexperience?

Of course, when I speak of our lack of knowledge, I am not complaining, Christian People, of our ignorance of the structure of this Planet, of the occult influences of the movements of the Celestial Bodies, or of the power that upholds the earth poised in mid-air; nor does it trouble me that the works of Nature are so many hopeless Enigmas for us.

Assuming that to know all this is very desirable and well worth the quest, still this is not the ignorance that I am deploring now. The cause of my present regret touches us much

more nearly. What I do deplore is our painful ignorance of all that concerns us personally; that we do not know good from evil; and that our hands cannot hold the helm that should direct and rule the course and conduct of our lives.

Solomon the Wise, being one day deeply absorbed in this train of thought, said, What good is it for man to study things which transcend his capacity, all the while he remains ignorant of what it behoves him to know during his earthly pilgrimage!* Colossal presumption of corruptible man!

His tiny compass bestriding the course of the planets; his bridle on the neck of the elements; prying into the profoundest secrets of Nature; dragging into the light of day the treasures she has hidden in the bowels of the earth; sweeping wide oceans in search of new lands undreamt of by former ages—whither, we are tempted to ask, will the vague but daring enterprise of his insatiable curiosity finally land him?

And yet, with all this research, laborious and ubiquitous, here we are, strangers at home and to ourselves! We can neither decide the next step we ought to take, nor tell exactly whither our ill-balanced movements are leading us!

Yet it is evident that the first endeavour of a

* Eccles. vii. 21 and 29.

sensible person should be to "consider his ways" and to ponder how he may most prudently and providently behave himself.

And this is exactly what The Preacher would impress upon us in two little words:

"The eyes of the wise are in his head."* *Sapientis oculi in capite ejus.* Rather a quaint way of putting it!—"The eyes of the wise man are in his head." But he wished to make us understand that, just as Nature has placed the organs of vision in the most commanding position afforded by the body, so that they may guide our movements, and descry afar off dangers and difficulties that threaten or hinder our onward march; so has Divine Providence enthroned our Reason in the Soul's upper chamber to direct our steps along the right path, and thus to keep a wide lookout for any deviating influences to be suspected in our environment.

So let the world acknowledge that there is no teaching more needful than that conveyed in this saying of the Wise man. And yet, Christian People, if we do act upon it to some extent in matters of minor import; yet we neglect it in the capital emergency of life.

What blindness on man's part! Not one of us ever complains of his lack of intelligence. We pride ourselves on that reasonableness which distinguishes all we say and do. Even in our

* Eccles. ii. 14.

recreation and in our games we must show alertness in mind and body. Our very movements and gestures are instinct with the quickness and the grace acquired by drill and practice.

It is only in our moral department that we disdain either to consult or to obey our Reason. That is left to organize itself anyhow, slovenly and quite at random. And lest you should imagine, Christian People, that I am bringing some railing accusation against the methods of mankind, observe, I pray you, how men and women spend their time.

Is not each succeeding stage of their life marked by its own characteristic mistakes and follies? What is there so mad as effervescent youth, with its boldness bred of inexperience? Always rash in its enterprises, and too much blinded by prejudice and passion to know clearly what it would be at! As for man's riper years they are vexed with incessant and increasing care, troubled by this, that, and the other thing; all equally tiresome and equally profitless. The wish to make ourselves a position; to amass a fortune: our ambition, revenge, jealousy: what storms there are to disturb the calm of *this* stage of our existence

And, after that, Old Age; too idle and too impotent, too cold and passionless to feel anything but weariness when called upon for vigorous or virtuous action; its fleeting Day ever

troubled by the anticipation of some doom-dealing Morrow.

Let us look back for a while over the years that are past. However partial our judgment may be, we feel obliged to pronounce sentence of condemnation on almost every act of ours to which their fleeting hours have lent a date. And here I make no exception of our most striking achievements, since in order to be striking they were not bound to be more meritorious than the rest.

The greater part of what we did—can it be said to have been the outcome of mature reflection or of deliberate choice? Were we not dragged, driven, or tempted into it by some capitulation of our intelligence or of our affections; a motive which has so often supplied the impulse for our ill-considered fitful action all along the line?

And, indeed, in circumstances where we imagined ourselves to have been in some degree guided by prudent considerations, what one judgment or decision, I would ask, have we arrived at that was based on sound fundamental principles? Did we ever think of doing anything because essential Right and Reason demanded it of us? When have we ever studied the nature and constitution of our souls or selves and their attendant needs? How much time have we spent in considering what shape our inner life

should take, or in asking ourselves the question why we are here at all?

No; we have allowed ourselves to be borne along by the influence of friends, by our own swelling pretensions, by the daily responsibilities and work of mind or body, by our *so-called* interests—blind as we ever are to our real ones —never striking out a path for ourselves except when actuated by motives quite alien to such as should have made for our true well-being.

So life drifts out upon an ocean of vain projects and of vainer imaginations; insomuch that even the wisest among us—when youth's first ardour which gave a relish to the things of time and place has been tempered by enjoyment—even they, the wisest, are astonished that they could ever have given themselves so much trouble about nothing at all!

And what is the reason, Christian People? Is it not Man's failure to perceive what things he ought to do and his blindness as to the one true end towards which our whole life and action should look and move?

That to perceive these truths is no child's play is true, and should be acknowledged; for all the wise men in the world have tried their hand at it, as all the wise men have failed.

There from your classic height, O My Philosopher, you cry aloud and tell me that "Here in this world I have to tread a path

slippery and beset with snares." I grant it. I am well aware of it. I learnt it by my own experience. You stretch out a hand to uphold and lead me; but I should like to make myself sure, first of all, if the adequacy of your guidance can be guaranteed, because—

"If the Blind lead the Blind, both shall fall into the ditch!" *

And why should I trust myself in your hands, O Futile Philosophy? What do I hear in your Schools but a series of academical disputes which have always been going on, but which seem to be no nearer their end to-day than they were yesterday? You send us away filled with doubt, but with no decisions. Observe, Christian People, if you please, that since men took to philosophizing, the Capital Questions have always been: What are the essential duties and obligations of mankind? What is the true aim of human life? But the solution warranted by *these* to be certain, has been declared by *those* to be false.

Now, let us suppose, the variety of opinions being what it is, that I, a man ignorant of what ought to be done in the world, am set in the midst of a congress of Philosophers. Let there be gathered together, if such a thing were possible, all the great men who have ever borne a reputation for wisdom and learning. Well,

* S. Matt. xv. 14.

when might the poor fellow hope to be rid of his perplexity if, that is, he had ever been foolish enough to expect any definite result at all from the debates of such a Parliament? Sooner will fire and water make up their quarrel than philosophers come to any agreement among themselves about their own dogmas. *Nobis videmur insanire.* "We all think each other mad!" as Saint Jerome said long ago.

No, Christian People, no! I could never bring myself to rely merely on human reason. It is so fickle and unstable, and has so often fallen into error that to entrust one's self to its sole guidance would be to run into manifest danger.

If I look at my own inner self and behold that vast and heaving ocean—the toss and tangle of human logic and opinion—nowhere in that wide wild waste can I descry any spot so calm or any refuge so safe that it is not already famous as the scene of some moral and spiritual shipwreck. Insomuch that the Prophet Job, in the vehemence of his lamentation over the various calamities that befall human life, was justified in using words to the following effect: O you that navigate the seas and traffic with distant lands, bringing to our shores their precious spoils; tell us, Have you never, during your long and weary voyages, discovered the abode of Understanding or ascertained to what

highly favoured province Wisdom is withdrawn? Hidden she is, indeed, from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air: from the eyes, that is, of the heavenly minded: *abscondita est ab oculis omnium viventium; volucres quoque cœli latet.* Death and Destruction—tottering Age, that is, and senile decrepitude, bowed with years and bending, as it were, over its own grave—Death and Destruction can only say, Well, after prolonged search and with much dear-bought experience, a confused rumour did reach our ears; but we are unable to give you any information later or surer as to what or where it is: "Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?" *

Wherefore, driven as I am by the tempest of contrary and conflicting opinion, vague with mists of doubt and ignorance, I see no refuge but with Thee, O Incomprehensible Wisdom! Thou shalt be to me a haven of certainty where all my errings and strayings shall have an end. What Thou wert of old to Thy People Israel, guiding their footsteps across vast tracts without culture and without inhabitant, by the light which broke from that mysterious fiery pillar upon the darkness of the desert night; such, of Thy Gracious Goodness, hast Thou promised to be to me! Thy Law and Thy

* Job xxviii. 20.

Testimony shall shine as a heavenly torch to reassure my wavering judgment and to direct my uncertain steps: *Lucerna pedibus meis verbum tuum, et lumen semitis meis.* "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths." *

I determined, said the Preacher, to withdraw myself wholly from the pursuit of pleasure in order that I might give myself entirely to the study of Wisdom until I should discover what is needful for the Children of Men. But, continues this wise Ruler, I saw that man's life was not long enough for such research.

And, indeed, human wisdom is so slow of growth, and life so precipitate in its flight, that scarcely have we gained some smattering of the various branches of science we would fain acquire, before Death cuts short our term of study by uttering his final irrevocable call; whereas, in the study of God's Law we become expert as soon as we begin. "Fear God!" And there you have it all: a summary of doctrine which gives "subtilty to the simple, and to the young man knowledge and discretion." † So that, declares the Prophet David, though in my youthful days I was sore troubled with the opposition of powerful enemies and the intrigues of old and cunning courtiers, yet I found myself more than a match for them all.

* Ps. cxix. 105 (P.B.V.) † Prov. i. 4.

I used to laugh at the plots of those veteran schemers without having practised any other strategy myself than that of simply learning and obeying the commandments of my God. "I am wiser than the aged, because I keep Thy commandments." *

For consider, Christian People, these great and powerful men of genius. Not one of them knows exactly what he does or is doing. Do we not continually see the failure of their far-seeking designs owing to the lack of some essential force or energy which ruins the whole enterprise? The result of human action is generally so random and matches so ill with the means employed, that a man should be blind not to perceive that there must be some hidden but formidable power which takes pleasure in thwarting human projects and which makes fools of these great intellects who imagine that they can turn the world upside down; failing to see all the while that there must exist a Master Mind which makes use of them as its counters, just as they, in playing their own game, make use of others.

It must be granted, in short, Dear Brethren, that in the confusion of human affairs, the only security, the only sound science, consists in allying one's self once and for all with this Supreme Intelligence.

* Ps. cxix. 100.

What a consolation it is for any human soul to follow the dictates of Sovereign Reason, under whose guidance he can never err nor stray! Otherwise our affairs must be carried on haphazard and left to chance; since it would be a foolish idea to entertain, that we can take so exact an estimate of any issue as to order the happening of events just how and when we please. No! The jostle of men and things is too involved and unaccountable for that!

The Sower and the Reaper find great advantage, no doubt, in observing the signs of the weather before they scatter their seed or put in the sickle; nevertheless, says the Seer, Lest I should fail to give you fair warning on this head; he that observes too narrowly every shift of wind shall not sow, and he that is always watching the clouds and waiting for perfect weather shall never reap.

His object in making use of this simile is to remind us that it is a mistake to think that everything will fall out exactly so as to square with our plans. Such is the fate of all human projects that some one element of success is always lacking to them, so that the most far-seeking and far-seeing prudence is obliged to leave to chance the central aim and purpose of its action.

Have nothing to do, therefore, Righteous People, Children of God, with any such procedure

as this! Professors of a Wisdom more than human should deem it unworthy of persons so well-advised to abandon their schemes to the mercy of luck or chance; and seeing that our reason possesses neither power nor steadiness enough to ensure the success of our undertakings by means of a consistent conduct, be guided by that Divine Wisdom which governs all so well.

Never let me hear you complain, either, that it is beyond your reach. Have you not learnt that by a marvellous manifestation of Divine good will, it has become current coin?* It flows, so to speak, through the pages of Holy Writ, whence it is drawn out by us preachers to be served to you in sermons and instructions. There the Mighty Wisdom, the living food of the Just, turns with motherly meekness into simple milk for the nourishment of such as are still babes in Christ.

What more, therefore, can we expect, now that the Everlasting Word has taken our Flesh in order to put Himself upon our level? When there we were unable to discover any certain path because of our errors—the Very Way Himself came to find us out, as Saint Augustine

* "Though truths in manhood darkly join,
Deep seated in our mystic frame,
We yield all blessing to the Name
Of Him who made them current coin."
TENNYSON'S *In Memoriam*, xxxvi.

said; for Jesus Christ is the Way. He is also the Teacher and Guide promised us by the Prophet Esaias:* "Thine eyes shall see thy teachers; and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way." What unspeakable mercy! Let every Faithful heart rejoice! We are but children—ignorant of all that we ought to know. But, having such a Teacher, we have good cause to exult in our ignorance, since it led our Heavenly Father to place us under the conduct of so expert a Guide!

This kind Leader is both God and Man. Authority without appeal! Meekness Incarnate! A Teacher who has been tactful enough to win both our love and our respect has won everything. I respect my Teacher because he is God. And that my love for Him might become more familiar and fearless, it pleased Him to become Man! Any merely human providence I should distrust. A yoke of man's imposition I could easily shake off. "The former," as Tertullian observes, "would be too liable to err. The latter too open to contempt." But I bow and surrender myself to the authoritative† utterances of the Saviour Jesus. Such as I can understand I accept as an embodiment of most admirable doctrine. In those which are beyond me I

* Isa. xxx. 20, 21.

† "He taught them as one having authority."

recognize and worship an infallible oracle. If they are too large for my comprehension, they are at all events worthy of my belief; and the School where this doctrine is to be learned has this further advantage for me: that there a humble submission helps me to understand more quickly than laborious research. "Come, then," I would say to the Educators of our own time, "come to this Teacher that hath Words of Eternal Life! Have done with Plato and his god-like eloquence! Enough of Seneca and his lofty maxims! The simplicity of Jesus is more majestic and more convincing than all their ponderous affectation! *One* used to mock at the misery of mankind. *Another* would wring his hands over it in despairing pity. But Jesus—Jesus the humble and the homely—comes not only to pity but to help: not merely to teach us but to bear us in His arms. Yes, at peril of His life, He goes forth to seek the sheep that was lost, bearing it home across His shoulders, "because, having wandered far and wide, the poor thing is tired out—*multum enim errando laboraverat*," as Tertullian says. In the presence of such a Master who can hesitate?

Besides, He is none of your academical Philosophers who applaud Poverty from the summits of wealth, or that preach Patience with the husky tones of satiety and surfeit; for He and His Disciples sealed the truths they

proclaimed by the shedding of their own blood. His holy teaching was but the outcome of His life and character—merely "living aloud." * He proved the truth of His Doctrine by His deeds rather than by His words. He

> "wrought
> With human hands the creed of creeds
> In loveliness of perfect deeds
> More strong than all poetic thought." †

He *did* a great deal more than He *said;* for He had to accommodate His teaching to our incapacity, whereas He was constrained to *live* in this world as a faultless specimen of inimitable perfection. What are you afraid of, then, O men of little courage? This excellent Master has already determined every question for us if not by Precept, then by Example. In the sphere of Morals He has left no point undecided. I find you standing, bewildered and perplexed, on the threshold of Christian Piety. You are afraid to enter thereupon because you can see nothing at your first glance save doubts and difficulties. You cannot tell if in the course of this river there be any ford where you can get across.

Fix your eyes on the Saviour Jesus, who, in order to rid you of your doubts, has crossed

* "His song was only living aloud,
His work a singing with his hand."
Life and Song, by Sidney Lanier.

† *In Memoriam*, XXXVI.

before you. There He stands, triumphant, on the further shore, calling to you, stretching out His Hand, assuring you that you have naught to fear. Look, *look* at the place hallowed by His footsteps! He has marked it with a ray of light. Is it not a shame for Christians to be afraid of following where they see the footprints of the Lord Jesus? It is indeed impossible to deny, Dear Brethren, that we should be ill-advised when possessing this safe conduct if we were to let ourselves be led astray again by the falseness and folly of worldly wisdom.

I considered my ways. Amid the varied and diverse errors of my life, I looked carefully to see if I could meet anywhere with certainty; and I learned, O Saviour Jesus, that it was sheer madness to seek it elsewhere than in Thy Righteous Judgments. Therefore, with thy help, I resolved to turn my feet unto thy testimonies —I considered my ways—and the rather, because I saw there, not only the Light which Illumes my Ignorance, but I recognized also *the only Infallible Law which could rule the Disorder of my Life.* And that shall form the subject of our Second Part.

PART II

THE CHRISTIAN CARNIVAL: THE BEAUTY OF OBEDIENCE

PART II

THE BEAUTY OF OBEDIENCE

It was impossible but that the profound ignorance in which man was plunged concerning the proper direction of his moral and spiritual affairs, should have thrown his affections and affinities into the present confusion. For just as the steersman, whose knowledge of the ship's bearing has vanished with his guiding star in the blackness of the storm, lets go his hold of the tiller, allowing the ship to drift at the mercy of wind and waves, so do men who, by their errors, have lost the true principle which should regulate their practice, allow themselves to be carried hither and thither by every shift of whim or fancy. Each turns his inclinations into an Idol, perverting thereby the whole theory and conduct of his life. How many people we meet who would like to be left each one to live as might best fall in with his own conceptions of what life should be, and who long to be rid of such a lot of inconvenient restrictions! For

that is how they speak of the godly injunctions of Divine Law. Or if we do not dare to express our opinion quite so frankly, yet are we not living just as if that was our creed? Say what we please, our plan is to give way to the promptings of passion, or, should we sometimes turn a deaf ear on this side, it is but to listen on the other to suggestions more outrageous than ever, and therefore much less in accordance with the dictates of reason. We do not set Prudence to choose out for us inclinations of good and virtuous tendency. No, that is not the way of the world—nor our own common system or method! But when once our earliest and predominating inclinations have been formed in us—I cannot tell how—by various subconscious tendencies and affinities, or by a kind of dumb instinct: a fact which is all too clear and certain: then, so long as we manage to give them a clear course for the attainment of their final goal, we flatter ourselves that we have done everything that can be expected of us so far. It is what we call being consistent. So great is the actual perversion of things from their proper character and use! Or else—since among so many cravings, as mad as they are blind, some must be at cross-purposes with others—we modify such according to season and circumstance; leaving pleasure, for instance, in order to amass a fortune; and that is what we call business,

knowledge of the world, and how to get on in it. But to go to the source of the mischief, and once for all to cut out the root of these evil tendencies, that is what no one ever gives a thought to.

Poor deluded mortals! Who, I ask, in God's Name! can have plunged us into such a sea of misconception? And how comes it to pass that, being of Divine extraction, as Saint Paul says,* we do not perceive that we must adopt some much higher standard than this, in conducting our affairs? If, moreover, what our Fathers declared in opposition to the teaching of the Epicureans and the School of the Libertines be true—namely, that the Universe is governed by Eternal Providence; and that human action, whatever inconsistency we may detect in it, is directed by Infinite Wisdom—does it not become absolutely necessary that our acts should be begun, continued, and ended according to some fixed law and order? And should such high and far-seeing guidance be beyond our capacity, might not experience, at all events, have taught us that, being conscious of many desires contrary to our own well-being, our true wisdom would be to learn, not how to gratify, but how to curb them? For, Great Heaven! what would become of human affairs, were each individual to be swayed by the bias of his own

* Acts xvii. 29.

inclinations! How was it that such human monsters as Nero, Caligula, and the like, brought themselves to the commission of such outrageous and brutal crimes? Was it not owing to the unbridled licence they assumed for doing as they pleased? In order to teach us, Christian People, that there is no animal so fierce and so untamable as man is, when once he allows himself to be mastered by his passions. Hence it becomes necessary to assign some limit to our appetites by the imposition of rigorous and invariable laws.

Since, moreover, we all possess the same human reason and are endowed with a common nature, it is indisputably clear that we are all destined for a common end; and it follows necessarily that the law to be laid down should be the same for every one of us.

Now you shall see, Christian People, by means of incontrovertible arguments, that this law must be no other than the law of God.

Where our untowardness shows most conspicuously is in the circumstance that we are, morally speaking, always *abroad*—never at home! I mean that our pre-occupation, our business, our recreation, our intercourse, are all centred in *external* things. I have already said something on this point at the beginning of this discourse, and I repeat it here that I may derive some further lessons from it. But you will not

oblige me to enter a second time upon the detailed consideration of our acts. Let each examine himself, and he will have to confess that his motives for action are derived entirely from *outside;* whereas the very first thing the needed Law should do is to bring us back to ourselves. You have done, let us suppose, a good stroke of business, or you have managed to amass great riches, or have wormed yourself into the good graces of some influential personage who can render you important service; and I will further suppose, if you like, that you have gained the whole world! Your soul, however, is in no better plight; your behaviour is none the more decent on that account. "*I* am quite out of the running," says the stern Tertullian. "No one has ever seen me dancing attendance on the persons of the Great. I neither wait at their doors nor waylay them in the street. I don't tear my lungs by shouting in Courts of Law. I never appear in the Market Places, or in the Public Squares. My workshop is *Myself*, and there I work away. That is all I care for. That is all my business. *In me unicum negotium mihi est.*"

In other words, he was very anxious and pains-taking about his own inner-life, about *himself*. Thus, as I was saying, the first effect of this determination is to turn our attention within, with a view to self-knowledge and self-reform.

But were there no other hindrance to the practice of this introspection, pride—pride ever on the alert!—would at once thrust itself upon our attention. For look at the proud man, how he is for ever taking his own portrait, contemplating himself from every possible point of view, and always with the greatest self-complacency. Pride will make him introspective. Is it not pride, too, Christian People, that withdraws so many philosophers from among the common throng? "We want," say they, "to think and meditate all by ourselves." And we must certainly give them credit for speaking the truth; for what they want is to be shut up in themselves, in order to contemplate the grandeur of their own conceptions, to satiate themselves with their self-made and, therefore, self-convincing arguments, and to hatch some fantastic ideal of virtue which they themselves fall down and worship. But they fail to recognize that they cannot do without the Great God from whom all their illumination radiates. Puffed up and blind with self-conceit, the sole aim of all their academic cobweb-spinning is to tickle their own fancy. And there we have the real and only source of man's disorder and disorganization. What, then, shall withdraw us into ourselves to some useful purpose; away from that host of profitless objects with which our minds have been so long infatuated? There

can be but one answer, and that is, "The Law of God accepted with Christian meekness." It is Christian meekness which produces a habit of wholesome introspection, for it will lead us to recognize our nothingness; teaching us that we hold all that we are and everything that we have, by Divine Permission, subjecting us at the same time to the authority of God's Law, and submitting us to His Will, which is the sovereign guide of human life and action. "God," says the Preacher, "made man upright." And this is how the learned Saint Augustine defines uprightness. There are three things which must always go together: Rectitude, Law, and Order. Anything to be well-ordered must be in subjection to those superior powers which ought by right to control it. That which constitutes Order is the subjection of the individual to the will of those to whom he owes obedience. This, therefore, says Saint Augustine, is the injunction given by God to man: *Regi superiore, regere inferiorem.* That he should rule his subordinates and obey his superiors. So that, just as sound and healthy Human Reason directs men's ordinary conduct, *so* the Director of Human Reason must be God Himself. When, therefore, man's Reason orders his conduct according to God's Will, the result is that admirable consistency, that well-balanced moderation, that sweet reason-

ableness, which constitute the ripest beauty of the Soul.

In order to appreciate fully this excellent teaching of Saint Augustine, let us arouse our attention and note carefully that the Will of God is the supreme rule with which all other rules must be in agreement. Only in so far as they conform to this primary, absolute rule, which borrows nothing from without, but is its own authority; only so far can these latter be said to possess either justice or validity. So, in Psalm xix., we find David declaring that "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." They afford their own justification. It is as if he had said, The judgments of men *may* from time to time turn out to be very fair and exact; but they cannot be said to be so intrinsically and essentially. All such secondary decisions must of course be compared with the Divine Verdict from which they derive all their own force.

But, as for the Judgments of God, says the Holy Prophet, they are true of their own inherent truth, and are therefore self-justified. Insomuch that the Will of God which presides over the Universe, of which it is also the rule and measure, becomes consequently the infallible director and controller of all earthly affairs, the unalterable law by which they are all governed.

In which connection I have a remark to make

about the Prophet David, which may perhaps prove edifying to godly hearers. Always full of devout admiration for the working of Divine Providence, he passes insensibly from the celebration of the Wisdom of the Most High, as exhibited in his mighty works, to the consideration of His *Laws*. Thus, in Psalm xix., "The Heavens," says this great observer, "declare the glory of God." And then, after having spent half the Psalm in glorifying the Creator in His Works, he occupies the remainder in hymning the equity of His decrees. "The law of the Lord is undefiled. The testimonies of the Lord are sure." And with such-like reflections he concludes this beautiful canticle. Again, in Psalm cxix.,* "Thy word," says he, "O Lord, endureth for ever in heaven. Thy truth also remaineth from one generation to another: Thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and it abideth. It is in obedience to Thy order that the days succeed each other with their invariable revolutions; for all things, Lord, serve Thee." And then he adds: "If my delight had not been in Thy law, I should have perished in my trouble."

Now, Faithful People, what would he have us learn from this? What link does this sweet psalm discover to us here, between the works of God and His Law?

* Verse 89, etc.

Is it an accidental coincidence that this sequence is to be so frequently observed in the Book of Psalms? Or does it not rather strike you as a solemn appeal to our consciences? Lift up your eyes, O Sons of Adam! Consider the wonderful symmetry of construction to be found in this fair earth, ye Men made in God's image! Notice the fitness of its several parts and the harmony of it altogether. Nothing was ever better planned than is this mighty and imposing fabric. And the reason of it is that the Will of God has been everywhere strictly obeyed, His designs carried out, and everything controlled by His arrangement.

For this Will, being its own Law, always just, always equable, always uniform; whatever submits itself, therefore, to its guidance, is bound to move in a well-established order: and hence the measured cadence, the harmony and balance of worlds and systems. Now, if these same poor inanimate bodies derive such comeliness from obeying the decrees of their Maker, what would be the beauty and the splendour of intelligent beings, if they were to rule themselves according to His Word!

Inquire of any or of all the Creatures of His Hand, and if they had the power of speech they would proclaim aloud that their well-being consists in obeying the laws of Inscrutable Providence, and that it is thence that they derive

all their perfection and all their glory ; but having neither speech nor language, they never cease telling us this truth by means of the uniformity and loyalty of their obedience. And now for you, O Sons of Men and Children of God! You whom a Heavenly Father has illuminated by the radiation of His own infinite intelligence, what will be the sum of your ingratitude, if showing yourselves to be more stupid and insensible than dead and soulless creatures, you are too obstinate to obey the laws which God has given you since the beginning of the world by the ministry of His Holy Prophets, and, last of all, and in the fulness of time, by the mouth of His Beloved Son? This, as it seems to me, is what the Prophet David would have us learn.

Great God! Christian People, what will be our confusion when we have to appear before that dread Tribunal to hear ourselves reproached in the presence of the Holy Angels with having thought so lightly of that Immortal Nature with which God endowed us, that instead of taking every care to rule its life and action in conformity with its true spirit, instead of always working away at this nature, stamped as it has been with the likeness of God, we have busied ourselves with things always superfluous, and, more often than not, sinful as well? Oh! the folly of it! And oh! the *baseness!* O just and unavoidable reproach! Lord! I would be beforehand with

it! Long enough! too long, indeed, has my soul's interest wandered from home affairs to outside preoccupations—gambling, bad company, greed, debauchery. I will return home to the inner chamber of my life: at all events during this Lenten Season now so nigh at hand. I will consider my ways. I will ascertain the rule by which they should be governed; and since there can be no other rule than that of Thy just and holy Commandments, I will turn my steps towards Thy Testimonies. It is my latest and irrevocable determination; which may it please Thee to ratify with Thy all-ordering Grace! That Grace shall make me taste Repose where I have just discovered Order, and where I had before found Truth and Certainty: in convincing you of which statement, Christian People, I shall arrive at the end of this discourse.

PART III

THE CHRISTIAN CARNIVAL:

THE CARNIVAL OF LAW AND ORDER

PART III

THE CARNIVAL OF LAW AND ORDER

I DO not think, Christian People, that, after the wholesome doctrines which, as it seems to me, we have so clearly established from Holy Scripture, it will be necessary to go over again a long series of arguments in order to make you understand that our peace lies in our careful observance of God's Law.

We will content ourselves, therefore, with applying here, in a clear and simple manner, the doctrine which of God's Mercy we have just expounded, and which shall now be made to appear with all its force and cogency.

Everything begins to enjoy peace so soon as it fulfils the laws of its natural healthy being. Let us suppose that we have been suffering from a long and dangerous illness. By degrees our strength returns, and our constitution resumes its normal healthy tone, eloquent of forthcoming ease and enjoyment. And why should not the like great calm descend upon

the soul, when once the fulfilment of God's Law has ended its disorders? The Law of God endows the soul with absolute certainty and decision, both of will and action, in such sort that doubts having been dissipated and errors rectified, not by evidence which has convinced the reason, but by a supreme authority, more certain and less liable to be shaken than the most weighty arguments; then must the understanding perforce acquiesce. The will, too, having adopted an invariable rule which trims and prunes its extravagances, should it not likewise enter upon a season of holy and heavenly peace? That is why the Psalmist tells us that, "The statutes of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart." They rejoice the heart because they are right,* because they regulate its affections, and give it that disposition which is the most wholesome and healthy for it, placing it in an environment which involves its perfection.

What dissatisfaction there always is in connection with human affairs! We never know whether we are acting for the best or not, whether we are doing well or ill. What may be best for our business is bad for our health. In pleasing one's self one displeases one's friends; and so on. But when we submit ourselves to the Will of God, and keep His commandments

* Ps. xix. 8, *i.e.* straight, correct, just.

we do well all round ; for when this particular good has been done, all the rest is but of slight importance.

In a word, we have done well, because this particular good act involves submission to supreme, universal, and essential Goodness. For how, Christian People, can we fail to be at peace while we are co-operators with Goodness Itself? What sweetness and tranquillity such action will bring to any human soul! Thine it is, O Sovereign Lord, Thou who art Thyself the Highest Good—to dispense to us Thy Creatures all the good things of time and place. But ten thousand times more blest are they whose sole inheritance is Thyself! That is the portion of those Thy Children whom Thou of Thy unspeakable mercy hast gathered round about Thee in Heaven their Home! And as for us poor exiles! Although we are far distant from that Heavenly Land, yet we are not altogether deprived of Thy presence. We have Thee with us in Thy Holy Law. We have Thee in Thy Holy Word. That wholesome Law! That Comfortable Word! "Sweeter than honey and the droppings of honey-combs!" says the Prophet David; "More to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold!" For consider, Christian People, that this inestimable Law is a ray of Divine Truth, a leakage earthward of Supreme and Sovereign Righteousness. Never doubt

but that the fountain retains somewhat of the qualities of its source. "Thy servant," sings the loving heart of the Psalmist, "keepeth Thy commandments, and in keeping of them there is great reward." * "Not in any other thing," says Saint Augustine, "but in the mere keeping of them. And the reward of it is great because there is no other satisfaction so sweet and lasting."

Take the case, Brethren, of a good Christian man living his own quiet simple life. He governs no states; he has no part in the direction of public affairs; he occupies no prominent position either in politics or in society, as do the great statesmen and leaders of the day. Now, you might be inclined to say that such a man was doing nothing at all for the world or in it. He is ignorant of Nature's Mysteries. You never hear him talk about the stars or their courses. These profound subjects would probably be beyond him. He appears vulgar and commonplace; yet, if we know anything at all about what we have just been saying, that man is guided by Eternal Wisdom. His conduct, being based upon divine principles, is steadier and surer than heaven and earth; insomuch that the round world and all that it contains is more liable to confusion and collapse than this man's expectations are to fail in their fulfilment.

* Ps. xix. 11.

In worldly matters we seek out counsellors whose advice often lands us in worse perplexity than we were before. He, on the contrary, sings in harmony with the Psalmist, "Thy testimonies are my counsellors;" * or else he agrees with Jerome: "Thy testimonies are my friends." They whom we think to be our best friends too often deceive us, either through baseness or from ignorance. The righteous man, when *he* is in doubt, consults those faithful friends of his, God's Testimonies: friends, sincere and true, who tell him what he ought to do, and whose advice holds good for Eternity. They are worth a thousand beatitudes to the man who has found them. He may mock at all the uncertainty and untowardness of human affairs! And again, and for this very reason, I dub that man Happy!

Let me ask you earnestly and before your consciences: Have you obtained all that you ask or desire? Have you no outstanding claim? There is probably no one in this congregation who can say he has none. "The husbandman waiteth," says the Apostle Saint James, "for the precious fruit of the earth." His life is spent in perpetual looking forward. He labours in the hope of reaping. He reaps his crop in the hope of selling it. Then he begins the process all over again. And so it

* Ps. cxix. 24.

is with other avocations. We lack so many things, in fact, that had not God endowed us with the faculty of hope as a kind of charm to soothe our anxiety with, and to temper in some degree the bitterness of our natural life, why, we should always be in trouble. This life present, which we can only live, a tiny morsel at a time, so tiny that it passes almost before we can grasp it, is fed upon hope. The future, which may perhaps form an important period of our life, we can only realize by means of hope, and till we heave our latest sigh, it is hope that must keep us going. Therefore, since we are for ever hoping, it is a sure sign that we have not yet arrived at the time or place where it is possible for us to possess the things we hope for. So that here, in this poor world, where no one has yet come into his inheritance, and where all are living in hope, he will be the happy man whose hope is the brightest and the best founded. Blessed, therefore, a thousand times blessed, are the godly and the upright! Thanks to Divine Mercy, they have been deprived of the present enjoyment of their good things; but no one has yet denied them the advantage of so great a hope.

Now, with such a hope as that, let us, if we may, compare the vain hopes of the world. Tell me truly, Christian People, have you ever yet discovered anything that fully satisfies your

soul's hunger and thirst? Every day sees its new plan started in the hope that it may succeed better than its predecessors; but only to prove the eternal baulking of our hopes. Hence the inconsistency and fitfulness of our life, which, finding nothing constant, no rule that can be relied upon as a basis of action, no means of securing any consistency of conduct, becomes a medley of adventures and risks, always recoiling in failure on the heads of the adventurers.

Sometimes the shortcoming has been on our side; sometimes on theirs. Sometimes, that is, we have failed to attain the object of our undertaking. Sometimes, when we did attain it, we found it to be not what we wanted; so much so that when once the initial zest which lends a fascination to things temporal has been dulled by time, the wisest men have been amazed to think that they ever could have worked so hard for nothing.

And if this be so, Christian People, what better can we do than put our trust in God alone, to desire that which He does promise and to love that which He commands?*

* "All great peoples are conservative; slow to believe in novelties; patient of much error in actualities; deeply and for ever certain of the greatness that is in LAW; in custom once solemnly established, and now long recognized as just and final . . . laws of God Himself. And greatly do I respect the solid character—a blockhead, thou wilt say; yea, but a well-conditioned blockhead, and the best-conditioned—who esteems

Why will we not seek this unbroken tranquillity? How can we be so blind as to risk our happiness elsewhere? Ah, Brethren, our mistake is this—let me have your attention, please, for another moment—we put ourselves off with false ideals, so that our unhealthy imagination reflects for awhile a semblance of happiness. We rest content with the good things of earth, not because they really *are* good, but because we *think* they are. Like those poor monomaniacs, whose disordered fancy revels in dreams and visions of unsubtantial bliss. But perhaps you will say, "Pray do not rob me of this comfortable delusion. I am quite content to be taken in thus pleasantly. It's a cheat, if you like, but I don't mind. It suits me." Well, I would willingly leave you under the spell of its smooth deceit did I not perceive that while, through its influence, you imagine yourself to be happy, your plight is truly pitiable.

Never, as we said just now, can there be any happiness anywhere, save when things are based on their own natural foundations, and are regarded in their true and actual light, as well as in their fullest scope and tendency; a view which it is impossible to obtain from the

all 'Customs once solemnly acknowledged' to be ultimate, divine, and the rule for a man to walk by, nothing doubting, not inquiring farther."—Carlyle, "Past and Present."

standpoint of either ignorance or error, a reflection which led the excellent Saint Augustine to observe that the first step on the downgrade of unhappiness is to *long* for things evil, and the last to *get* them!

This poor sick man, tormented with burning fever, drinks deep draughts of wine, thinking to gain strength and refreshment, whereas he is swallowing so much poison, and signing his own death-warrant. Does it not seem to you that the more he relishes his drink the more he ought to be pitied?

And now for the next four days it will be my lot to see men of clay—men of mud!—leading such a life in the sight of Heaven and Earth as never yet disgraced any brute beast! And do you mean to say that I am to call these men really happy, because they choose to parade before me their carnival of riot and excess; because they boast of having filled their bellies with good things; and because they make the whole neighbourhood hideous with their noise and their vulgar buffoonery? And yet, after all, what a scandal it is that, so close upon the days of humiliation and penitence, lewdness should celebrate its triumph! The Church, Our Wise Mother, knows that we devote the whole year round to worldly amusement, so she does her best to rescue six weeks from waste and wantonness. She would fain

provoke in us some desire for repentance; giving us an opportunity as the forty days of Lent come round again; taking it for granted that former experience of their wholesome effect will persuade us to persevere with our bitter medicine, and not to discontinue it. Ah! Human Nature! So averse to good advice! How unworthily is the Mother's Charity treated by her undutiful children! These Salutary Seasons of hers are seized upon as opportunities for renewed licentiousness. By way of honouring intemperance and debauchery, we let them lead the way in Public Procession to the threshold of the House of Prayer and Fasting! And as if we had undertaken the outrageous task of joining Jesus Christ with Belial, we inaugurate Lent with Bacchanalian disorder! Days of infamy and shame which deserve to be blotted out of the company of other honest days! Days not to be atoned for, even by a whole life of incessant mortification; much less by any Forty Days of lax observance! Does it not seem, Brethren, as if folly and wickedness were determined to block the road to repentance, occupying its approaches, making believe that their own broad track is the appointed narrow way up to the strait gate of Heaven! What wonder, then, if all that we have left of Lenten discipline be a tame and listless masquerade of gesture and grimace!

For thus much is certain: that the descent from penitence to licentiousness is facile enough; whereas to taste the bitterness of the former after we have surfeited ourselves with the sweets of the latter, is precisely that which the corruption of our nature will tolerate nohow!

You, therefore, Christian Souls, you whom our Saviour Jesus Christ has endowed with sound love of sound doctrine, just keep you in holy fear; for there is not a day that passes but may diminish something of modesty, somewhat of wholesome reserve. Look well to your ways, with the Prophet. Turn your steps, with his, to God's Testimonies. Doubt not but that therein you will find Law, Order, and Security, together with that undisturbed, unclouded Serenity of Soul, which has its beginnings upon Earth, and its consummation in Heaven!

III

PURE RELIGION AND UNDEFILED

DE LA BOISSIÈRE

Time of Louis XIV.

PURE RELIGION AND UNDEFILED

Religio munda et immaculata apud Deum et Patrem hæc est, Visitare pupillos et viduas in tribulatione eorum et immaculatum se custodire ab hoc sæculo.

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.—S. James i. 27.*

* Epistle for Fifth Sunday after Easter.

PROLOGUE

THE TWOFOLD LIFE

EVERY Christian man and woman is bound by the Rules of this Religion * pure and undefiled. *Religio munda et immaculata.*

Saint Paul tells them that they are, or ought to be, SAINTS.† Saint Peter calls them a Holy Congregation.‡ Councils and Fathers declare that the Grace of Baptism is the Grace of a Holy Birth. Nobody is excused or exempted from being a Saint. Men's divers callings make no difference whatever. This is a Rule without any exception. All men are not called to be Apostles or Martyrs, but all the World is expected to be Holy.

It is our business, then, to discover in what Holiness consists; to learn what is the character of this piety without spot, as well as its conditions.

* Religion = Latin *Religo*, I bind.

† 1 Cor. i. 2, "Called to be Saints," *i.e.* the whole Church at Corinth.

‡ 1 Peter ii. 9.

Some people form too exalted a notion of it. Others take too low a view; each view being prompted by selfishness.

1. The former: picturing the Saints as beings of another race, endowed with a higher nature, as well as being of some different mould from ourselves and looking upon sanctification as a spiritual luxury, so to speak; pretend to despise the more homely virtues, pooh-poohing men of their own day whose unpretentious lives might after all serve them for examples; while they seek at the same time to justify their own feebleness and failure.

2. The latter think that in order to be Saints and to practise the Pure Religion we profess, it is enough to shun the grosser forms of vice, to avoid the commission of sins that meet the public eye. Under cover of a life they call respectable and without reproach, they are quite content to lead a useless, objectless existence, sterile in all good works; not vicious, perhaps, but certainly neither virtuous nor Christian.

It is, therefore, quite in order, Brethren, that during these Holy Days of Solemn Assembly, when you are thinking more seriously about your personal sanctification, that we should ascertain definitely what this Christian sanctity is which forms our common calling; and for that purpose what better can I do than to

oppose to human misconceptions concerning such an important question, these Twin Truths:

That religion consists in the dual life of Godliness and Righteousness.* Godliness *within*: Righteousness *without*. Godliness to keep us free from the corruption of this present world: *immaculatum se custodire ab hoc sæculo.* Righteousness, or a going about doing good: visiting and consoling the sick, the weak, and the sad in their tribulation: *visitare pupillos et viduas in tribulatione eorum.* "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

This Religion consists, then, in Godliness or inward piety, teaching us that the faith and practice of a Christian which is to be pure in the sight of God, must before all things regulate his affections, emotions, temperament, desires; and that it is *not* the art of decorously arranging our external behaviour, as say and do godless leaders of a godless society.

It consists, secondly, in public well-doing; reminding us that true piety need not always turn out Hermits or Celibates devoted exclusively to the contemplative life, nor any other sort of extraordinary being; but that it predisposes ordinary men and women as a part of their daily round to uphold the weak and relieve the destitute.

* "That we may live a godly, righteous, and sober life."—*A General Confession*, Book of Common Prayer.

Bearing in mind that I am speaking to Christian Hearers already devoted to works of charity, I shall try to show you that all religion may be reduced to these two principles: *Taking care of one's self* and *Looking after one's Neighbour.*

Taking care of one's self. To keep ourselves, that is, pure and holy in this present world, by standing aloof from its corruptions: *immaculatum se custodire ab hoc sæculo.* "To keep himself unspotted from the world."

Looking after one's Neighbour. Namely, by succouring the Unhappy and the Unfortunate: *Visitare pupillos et viduas in tribulatione eorum.* "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

In a word, to separate ourselves from the world that sins and to console the world that sorrows. Twin Characteristics of True Religion. Two momentous Truths which I propose for your study, after that we have sought the guidance of the Heavenly Light.

PART I

PURE RELIGION AND UNDEFILED: GODLINESS

PART I

GODLINESS

"To keep himself unspotted from the world."

To separate one's self from the corruption of the world about us is an essential characteristic of Christian Holiness.

You, My Faithful Hearers, thoroughly understand, of course, that it does not always mean that bodily and social separation such as have been practised by so many pious men and women, who to escape the snares and pitfalls of social life and intercourse, have from their early years entrusted their faith and innocence to the protection of a secluded and devotional life.

Of Thy manifold and great mercy, Holy Lord, Thou hast hidden those Elect Ones from the distraction and publicity of secular life, shutting them within the inner Sanctuary of Thy Temple!

Nevertheless, Dear Brethren, I feel bound to tell you that piety does not always and for all

of us consist in withdrawing *from* the world; but rather in never being *of* it. For some it would appear, in leaving the world, have at the same time taken its spirit with them in their hearts.

This separation, then, must above all things be that of the self, a detachment of heart, enabling the Christian to live in the world, without being defiled by it. *Immaculatum se custodire ab hoc sæculo.* "To keep himself unspotted from the world."

Without that, it is impossible for us to be Christian. Without that there will be nothing in our Christianity corresponding to a Vocation so Divine. Without that we should be for ever excluded from the Communion of Saints who are accounted worthy to follow Jesus Christ, simply because they have ever been stedfast in their self-detachment from the world.

Tertullian used to speak of Christians as being a Select and Separate People; holding aloof from public employment, its business, and its pleasure: *Separati ab imperio, separati à foro, separati à theatro quod est spectaculum impuditiæ.*

So that, Brethren, in those earlier, happier times, before Religion had suffered the deterioration of her later years, there were few Christians to be found at Court, few in the employment of the State, few at the Bar, few in Business, and

none at the Theatres or other places of amusement.

There is always too much danger of seduction in those places for a Saint. Too many pitfalls for his sanctity. So the wise and wary Christian finds it better worth his while to keep clear of them altogether than to attempt to vanquish and overcome their evil influence.

But where have we got to? Do you mean to say that a Christian has absolutely no right to occupy any high public position whatever? May he never be Cæsar, Prince, Peer, Judge, or Magistrate? He may. For Grace Divine working in the hearts of the Great and the Rich, with all their wealth and honours, has furnished us with examples of piety in high life all the more remarkable on that account; shining like diamonds enhanced in value by their golden setting. Yes. He may; *if* while lifted up above his fellow-men he places himself at their feet by his meekness and his modesty; seeing in the lofty station whither God has exalted him not any personal superiority over *any*, but the Charity he is bound to exercise towards *all*. Always ready to give up any position in which his passions may become just so many obstacles to Sanctification; any position where he would *never* be thought worthy to go up higher, if he were not *always* prepared to

lend himself to what is *beneath* him: *Separati ab imperio.*

May not a Believer give his mind to business or be known on Change where Merchants most do congregate? He may. But it must be no promptings of greed that lead him there. The men of this world frequent without misgiving those haunts of wickedness and worry, where the roguery of to-day prepares the way for the greater roguery of to-morrow; where, as Saint Bernard says, the very least a man can lose is his peace of mind. No fortune, however great, believe me, can compensate you for your losses here on earth, where risking Charity you are risking all.

The prudent Christian, therefore, is bound never to enter there except when obliged and to leave as soon as possible. *Separati à foro.*

Are we to believe that a Christian may not go to the Theatre now and then; nor take his part in any pleasant social gatherings? He will not go so long as he bears in mind that he is bound by the most solemn vow and profession of our Holy Religion, obliging every one of no matter what calling or condition, to overcome the world with its morbid fascination, and to undo the Empire of Sense and Passion. Those Entertainments, moreover, are just so many conspiracies of the world assembled there, to stir the emotions and to subject more and more

completely the hearts of the audience to the influence of what is fleshly and physical, insomuch that any performance which should fail in this particular would be voted dull and tedious.

Unworthy, therefore, of the Christian Name are those who frequent such places—places where to remember that we are Christians brings the blood to our cheeks, knowing as we do, that Saints should never be found in any place where they need be ashamed of showing any sign of being Christians ; where, in a word, vice is represented in an alluring form : *Separati à Theatro quod est spectaculum impuditiæ.*

And thence it plainly follows : First, that there is a certain detachment of heart, a certain absence of mind, always necessary ; one which even in the very midst of the most worldly surroundings may keep those whose calling brings them there, free from taint. And, Secondly, that, not only absence of mind, but absence of body, is necessary for a Christian from a certain world where vice has become rampant.

God grant me Grace and Words that I may be able fully to convince you on these two points.

I say, then, first of all, that there is a detachment of heart which is always needful ; and without reminding you of the definition of a

Christian given us by Tertullian, it shall suffice me to set before you the use and practice of detachment from the world, which the Great Apostle Saint Paul prescribes for all those who find themselves obliged to live in its midst.

"*The time*," he says, "*is shortened henceforth, so that both they that have wives should be as though they had none; and those that weep, as though they wept not; and those that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and those that buy, as though they possessed not; and those that use the world, as not using it to the full; for the fashion of this world passeth away.*" *

A narrowing of the road, certainly, for the men of this world! If, that is, they are inclined to practise that absent-mindedness in the midst of worldly distractions which is so indispensable for the consecration of human life.

The time is short. Therefore, says the Apostle, let those who have wives be as though they had none. Warned by the briefness of life's span, and by the fear of wrath to come, the spirit of the faithful resolves to withstand the temptations of the flesh, whilst the *Flesh* on its part, determines against this resolution of the *Spirit;* and if it be impossible for the Christian to quench his fleshly burnings,† he will endeavour to

* 1 Cor. vii. 29 (R.V.).

† Saint Bernard used to sit in a bath of ice-cold water.—"Life," by Dr. Sparrow Simpson.

regulate them. How pure and holy the married life of Christians ought to be, whose portion it is to perpetuate a Race of Saints! For if conjugal fidelity be no longer a check upon laxity of morals; if the licentious manners of to-day have made it impossible for us to conceive or to imagine the strict and decorous lives of former times; the reason is, that we have forgotten or perhaps have never learnt the austere rule taught us by the Religion we profess: *Let those who have wives be as though they had none.*

"They that weep," continues the Apostle, "as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not." Adversity cannot crush, as prosperity cannot corrupt, the heart of the separated, single-hearted Christian. The "Good" and "Evil," which are but for a time, merit, Christian People, neither your joy nor your sorrow. As for the so-called "Evil;" Nature will sometimes demand your tears; tears, however, which Faith should quickly staunch. Sometimes you may have to yield somewhat to instincts of human tenderness, but nothing and never either to impatience or fretfulness. Here, after all, in this miserable world, where suffering is so common, ought not minor ills to be counted as good: weeping, not over your misfortunes, but over your sins? *They that weep, as though they wept not.*

Or, should riches find a place in your house, have you therefore good reason to rejoice? What pleasure can you hope to reap from them; whether you consult the New Testament, which forbids you to love them, and which limits their use; or whether you look forward to Death, which must ere long take them away, thus mingling with all your earthly enjoyments an element of bitterness? *They that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not.*

They that buy, as though they possessed not. Hear what the Apostle has to say on this point. The Unbeliever buys for his own exclusive profit and advantage. In the first glow of possession he spends all his affection on his new purchase. Whereas the Believer is scarcely less indifferent in the moment of buying than he is after years of possession. He is as much detached in heart from what he buys as if he were the seller instead of the buyer; for the abundance of his life does not consist in the number or value of the things that he possesses.

Finally, says the Teacher of the Gentiles: *Those who use the world, as not using it to the full;* living here on earth as exiles far from home, or travellers putting up at an inn.

And if you wish me to describe in detail and with precision this separation of heart and of self involved in that injunction, I say that to use this world as not abusing it is for you to

possess your good things instead of their possessing you; having acquired them without fraud, to dispense them with generosity, and to part from them without regret. To draw with fear from out your stock, taking just what is needful for your subsistence, keeping your affections fixed upon Him whose Grace is much more necessary for us than an Empire of Toys and Trifles. It is to guard carefully the approaches to your heart in the midst of worldly distractions, never opening it wide except to Heavenly influences. If seated at a well-furnished table, to be moderate in eating and drinking. To turn yourselves away lest you behold soul-polluting objects, having the eyes of Daniel, who, when at the Babylonish Court, gazed in the direction of the Temple at Jerusalem;* or the eyes of Tobias, which never looked upon heathen sports or shows. To rest from your work without relaxing your self-discipline; to enjoy yourself without excess; to work without grind or greed; to command without self-assertion; not to allow subordinates to feel the yoke of your authority, still less the sting of your temper; anticipating, each one of us, that moment when the world whose stage we tread shall vanish from our ken, leaving us all to be judged by one and the same Master. To be like Queen Esther when high station

* Dan. vi. 10.

demands it: appearing in public with every accessory of state and pomp; and to be afflicted and mourn in secret, filled with compunction for our sins; now shining amid the splendours of the palace, anon sympathizing with the pain and suffering of the hospital. Sighing with our fellow-sinners in the House of God; preaching deliverance to the captives, and healing the broken-hearted. In a word, to have a very light and limited traffic with the Egypt of this world, but to share its treasures impartially with its oppressed and afflicted. *They that use the world as not abusing it.*

For the fashion of this world passeth away: præterit enim figura hugus mundi: This world is but a *figure.* It is shape, fashion, form, phenomenon.* Its dainties are so many painted fruits and viands to take in none but the most unwary soul: a world of masks, personifications, illusions—*figura!* Its "good things" are but the cover for things essentially and eternally evil. To the fleshly eye the world would seem to last. To the eye of Faith—*præterit,* it passes nay, is now past and gone.

From the head of this proud Beauty here, the hair is beginning to fall already.† In the dimmed heaven of her once bright eyes the day is dull and sinking, as sings the Prophet Isaiah. Her face is no more that natural face

* "An appearance." † Isaiah iii. 24.

fashioned by the artless Hand of her Creator, but some toilet-countenance of hers whose complexion is applied daily by her own cunning fingers—*figura!*

The fashion of this world passeth: *præterit!* Why then should it impose upon us any longer?

> "Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
> Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?" *

Why do we still dream here below of some continuing city? On our right hand and on our left thousands are falling daily. The dew and freshness of early youth ere noon are parched and withered. Heads high and lifted up fall and are cast down.

O World-Dazzlers and World-Dazzled! Behold! Beware! Death, like a descending avalanche, is rushing towards you, to hurl you from your high places! If, therefore, this present world must end for us in a tick of the clock, why cannot we learn betimes to detach ourselves from its contents, which cling to us and must otherwise involve us in their own destruction? Acquire that separation of heart, therefore, which is, in fact, always indispensable, and for some of us, even, an absence of body too, from a certain depraved world, its gatherings, and its associations. Yes! absence of body will be as needful sometimes as detachment of mind.

* Shakespeare's "Sonnets," cxlvi.

And now, Good Women, what I have to say to you in the second place is this: Seeing that you are not altogether without anxiety about your sanctification, and have some desire to work out your soul's salvation by keeping yourselves pure and undefiled on your passage through things temporal, the part you must play is to break absolutely with a certain world which will have its own way, which justifies all its own doings, and knows nothing of Religion save its mere shell: attendance, that is, at its Services, and observance of its Ceremonies; a programme perfectly compatible with the supremacy and dominion of the passions. You see and know them well—those indolent, shallow, self-indulgent women, scandal-mongers and gamblers, who have nothing to offer you but dances and card-parties; who dream overnight about the dress for to-morrow, and long all the morning for the hour to light up and begin the evening's amusement; who think you good for nothing, or for very little, if you cannot join them in their empty, do-nothing existence, and who will laugh at you if, possessing a Christian Conscience, you decline to accompany them in their public promenades, or go with them to their places of amusement—if you will not, in short, live like Pagans, as they do.

And how much mischief one worldly woman can work among her fellows! Before long, with

that pliable disposition of yours, that nervous susceptibility, open to all the subtle influences of pleasant surroundings; a heart never without a tendency to swoon under any soft caressing touch; a piety still in its spring-blossom-stage, with no hardihood born of exposure to bleak weather—Yes, before long you will begin to yield to the pressure of your environment!

You will find yourself put off your guard by its lightning-play of jest and repartee, attracted by its rose-coloured view of life, seduced by its voluptuousness, and polluted by its filthy talk.

The step from the strict Christian level on which the passions are controlled down to that of the world, where they are let loose, is as short as it is sweet! To learn such lessons human nature has no need of a master. The gamut of lust is hummed off at a glance.

While still at the age during which the passions are at their strongest, it will cost you no little pain and perseverance to keep yourself clear of a world all smiles, appealing to every sense, and overflowing with enjoyment, or to build for yourself in its midst, some City of Refuge to flee to from its accursed haunts—to find some Shelter for the soul, a Tabernacle for the indwelling of the spiritual life.

But, again, when there is no choice save to live among people presenting every variety

of character and temperament, then still greater will be your difficulty in not joining the social gatherings and assisting at the entertainments of those whose acquaintance you have been obliged to make ; driven as you are, if you would live according to the rules of your religion, to run counter to their opinions at every turn, be always burning what they adore and adoring what they would burn, always swimming against the stream of their inclinations, always fighting yourself as well, and doing battle with the tenderness of your own heart.

Yet, should the doors of this world of contagion be closed against you, or if you yourselves would turn your backs upon it, you are not on that account condemned to a solitary existence ; for if, at length, when you begin to feel the languor and faintness of your Christian life, you seek the Lord in the Spirit of His Religion pure and undefiled, sympathy of instinct and the sharing in common of God's grace will soon lead you into the society of the godly : those who are fellow-seekers with you of the one Gift, fellow-travellers to the same Goal.

Your life will become bound up with that of the Children of God, who, like yourselves, are engaged in a holy traffic with Sacred Places and with Sacred Books. You will no longer complain that there is no such thing as righteousness to be found upon earth, which only appears

wanting to those whose commerce is restricted to the world of ungodliness and wrong. An honest man is not such a difficult thing to find, after all, for the man who desires to be one himself! *Bonus esto, bonos invenies.* Be righteous yourselves and you will soon find others.

Thus you will feel your Spiritual Life growing stronger and stronger in the society of the Christian People whom you have thus discovered, and also as a result of your self-separation from society which is both corrupt and contagious: *immaculatum se custodire ab hoc sæculo.* "To keep himself unspotted from the world."

But at the same time you will learn to comfort the world that mourns: *visitare pupillos et viduas in afflictione eorum.* "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

And thus we arrive at the Second Characteristic of Pure Religion, and also at the Second Part of our subject.

PART II

PURE RELIGION AND UNDEFILED: RIGHTEOUSNESS

PART II

RIGHTEOUSNESS

"To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."—S. James i. 27.

To comfort the world that mourns by helping the weak and consoling the bereaved is, says the Apostle Saint James, an essential feature of true piety: the common vocation of all Christian People: the daily occupation of all Saints. It is, moreover, Good Women, what is so constantly insisted upon by your Pastors and Evangelists.

So I have no need to spend time in proving to you here the indispensable nature of the obligation you are under to become the comforters of them that mourn; nor to lay down a law already so frequently and publicly enforced. It only remains to deal in detail with the practical application of this rule in your personal visits of condolence, and your almsgiving: *visitare pupillos et viduas in afflictione eorum.* "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

Visits which should be paid with alacrity of will. Visits from which you will return with abundant blessings on your head. Visits twice blessed: paid with alacrity and repaid with a sense of wholesome self-satisfaction.

First Reflection.—Helpful visits paid with alacrity. Ah! Could you but fully tell the worth of a visit which is a true work of Charity! Religion knows nothing of a sweeter savour; and if you ask for evidence, I answer that Mary, holiest of created beings, after she had conceived in her womb the Man that was God, thought she could do no better than to pay a visit: one of Duty, one of Charity: to her cousin Elizabeth. Now, judging by the feeble light of human reason, we might have expected that the first act incumbent on the Mother of a God would have been to give sight to some blind, or to raise some dead, to silence by irrefutable arguments the Jewish High Priests or the Gentile Philosophers; at all events, to have done something heroic and extraordinary!

But, as God's thoughts are infinitely higher than our thoughts, it pleased Him (according to the workings of His Eternal Wisdom which regulate the least important step of Mary's life) that, after the Incarnation of the Word had been accomplished, she should pay a visit and perform an act of Charity quite of a common and ordinary

kind. And then, with what alacrity she arose and went out of her house to enter that of her humble relative! *Exsurgens Maria abiit in montana cum festinatione.* "And Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste." * The steps of the Blessed Virgin were hindered neither by Pride nor by Sloth. Not by Pride: for she of Higher Degree does not disdain to go and see one of humbler station. The Mother of God comes to serve and to succour the Mother of Man. Not by Sloth: for she proceeds with haste, undergoing the fatigues of a long and wearisome journey. Fired with the like quick and active Charity, you will never hesitate a moment, O Christian Souls, when it is a question of helping the unfortunate.

These Visits, this Almsgiving, will be entered on the topmost line of your List of Engagements. Neither pride nor position nor indolence nor the many calls upon your time will ever be allowed to hinder this work. And, after all, what greater, what grander occupation can you have or would you desire than work that has its source in Charity? Observe how, in His Kingdom, Our Lord Himself gives the preference to the Poor, and with what alacrity He seeks them out. Down He comes from the Heaven of Heavens to visit His People Israel! *Visitavit et fecit redemptionem plebis suæ.* "He hath visited and

* S. Luke i. 39, 40.

redeemed His People." * Notice that on the occasion of *this* Visit, that the Poor were the first to hear the Glad Tidings, and that to them is dedicated the first page in Gospel History. They are always the Privileged Class! the first —almost the *only* Guests—at the Sacred Feast; becoming not servants merely, but Friends: Children: Chosen Ideals! For it was the Lord's good pleasure to be born poor, to live poor, to die poor. In Poor Shepherds He found His first worshippers. Poor Fishermen were His first Preachers. Poor Workmen His first Disciples. O Poor! O Mourners! You who reckon yourselves so unfortunate! Never would you call yourselves so if you could see yourselves as God sees you!

And you that possess the wherewithal to help them! You whom God has of His special favour set up on earth to be their Stewards—their nursing Fathers and nursing Mothers; thus associating you with His supreme interests who is the Father of the Poor! Ah! if religion were really a factor in your lives; if she were reigning as mistress of your hearts; with what zeal you would seek out the poor in their dens! With what tactful care you would visit the ailing and the bedridden! With what generosity you would liberate from the bondage of poverty these Freedmen of the Faith! With what

* S. Luke i. 68.

munificence you would provide for their spiritual destitution!

But, for the most part, Religion stifled by self, makes no move in the direction of Christian Charity. Or if she do still stir herself a little, it is in a languid, reluctant way, and with a calculating tardiness, as disastrous for the sufferers as that hardness of heart which denies them any assistance whatsoever.

The most trifling engagement is kept, to the neglect of charitable work. Be the occasion never so frivolous: a morning call, a few minutes' chat, or an entertainment: then every visit is promptly and punctually paid, except these to the homes of the poor. Society visits: visits that monopolize hours of your time already marked out for the performance of pressing duties. Visits whither you not only take your own passions and prejudices, but where you pick up those of other people; where Religion is forgotten in the buzz of frivolous conversation; where Charity is wounded by a subtle sagacity in discovering or inventing any scandal that can injure a neighbour and which is maliciously set a going for the public benefit; where, if you are Christians, you lose more than you gain, in the deterioration of your Christian character. Nothing goes bad so quickly as Manna.* Visits where, while absorbed

* "Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds."—Shakespeare's "Sonnets," xcv.

in gambling—no longer as a game, but as a financial speculation, a business, a possession, a plague! you lose sight of the poor: their hunger, their nakedness, their sickness. Visits of an utterly worldly character, which certainly distract and amuse you; but which lead one to ask, why should not these intervals now abandoned to amusement be concerned and occupied with your own needs as well as those of others?

"Oh, but," you say, "it is the rule of Polite Society to which I belong." So, then, this rule, which is of the least and last importance, you place first in your private Decalogue, than which none in the world is more scrupulously obeyed.

Now, a more plausible excuse for you would be that of the care of your children's education, the ordering of your households, and other like legitimate calls which might keep you to the house.

But I would remind you that there is a wide difference between doing a thing wisely at the proper time and in its proper place, and not doing it at all; yet, what is mighty strange, is to see you so ready to leave home in order to keep engagements whose objects are neither useful nor even harmless; while in fulfilling the weighty obligations of Religion you practise

such a marvellous circumspection, if you are not utterly indifferent: leading me to suppose that these paramount duties are but so many unessential accidents and accessories of true Religion.

I admit that there are times and circumstances under which for you to visit the poor would be an impossibility. But you can *always* reach them if you will. Why not make diligent search and inquiry for the addresses of the Secretaries and Organizers of Charitable Institutions and Philanthropic Societies and act through them? Again, when you do find time and opportunity to go and see the poor as the Holy Spirit bids you, could you not manage to take your children with you, thus turning their earliest footsteps towards some poor man's door, so that their first practical experience of the Christian life shall be the discovery of a source of happiness in sympathizing with and providing for the needs of their fellow-creatures: furnishing them at the same time with an object-lesson in human suffering and a premonition of what must be their own lot one day: teaching them to see Jesus Christ in the persons of the Poor, and to make the consolation of the desolate and the bereaved the chief aim and aspiration of their lives: *Religio immaculata hæc est, visitare pupillos et viduas in tribulatione eorum:* "Pure Religion and undefiled is this,

To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

Religion, Faithful Women, which should lead you to the performance of these good offices, will not only render them worthy of your enthusiasm, but will also make them wholesome and agreeable ; and I can assure you that, on returning from these visits to the bedridden and the afflicted, you will feel the glow of a mighty Benediction. And this brings me to my second reflection : Yes, Visits, which are paid with alacrity, repay the visitor with a sense of wholesome self-satisfaction.

Attend, I pray you, to what more I have to say.

Without affirming that the coin you have left in the poor man's lap will knock louder at the Gate of Heaven on your behalf than the echo of the most fervent prayer you ever uttered ; the consolations you have offered to the broken-hearted mingling with, and multiplying the grace of your own heart and the peace of your household ; I will content myself with asking you if the fevered, anxious, unblessed career of a woman of the world will bear comparison with the calm, steady, and fruitful life of a Charitable Christian ?

Let the former shine to her heart's content in the narrow world of self and sense, where, in the evil day, she has had to sound the depths of

infamy in order to gain the means of keeping up the merry round of game and gaiety, subjecting herself to downright discomfort and vexation of spirit that she might be able to perpetuate the fleeting pleasures always on the point of slipping from her grasp! Well, and what fruit does she gather out of it all?

The Poor, whose dole she has kept back that she might tire her head with superfluous gear and ornament: the workman, whose lawful wage she has withheld: her own family, which her extravagance has brought to ruin and covered with disgrace: a knowing world, which, condoning her faults, could never forgive her her good fortune—a touchy world which she has outraged by her open profligacy—all these combine to heap against her in her path an ever-swelling mass of malediction!

And if, in the midst of her wealth, she be not of a poor and self-distrustful spirit, meek and childlike, transforming, so to speak, all the grandeur and abundance of her possessions into insignificance and poverty; if her soul's thirst quickened rather than quenched by deeper and deeper draughts from the cloying cup of carnal pleasure; if her conscience (whose present calm must be due to its dense insensibility)—if her conscience, on being enlightened, should give no warning: then this much more is certain: that God, who shows judgment without mercy

to such as have shown no mercy, will never let fall upon her soul one drop of the healthful dew of His Blessing.

Look, on the other hand, on the truly Christian woman whose religious instinct, having turned away her heart from the world of depravity and left her deaf to the seductive sound of its loud but shallow laughter, now turns her steps towards the world that mourns, whither she wends her way to visit the sick upon his bed, and the prisoner in his cell, to feed the hungry, and cheer the down-hearted! There you will behold her decked with virtues which become her better far than the borrowed brilliance of pearl or diamond. There you will find her followed by a long retinue of good works which gain her a thousand-fold more honour and acclaim than the attendance of multitudes of serving men and maids. Blessed with the approving answer of a good conscience, crowned with the benedictions of a faithful people, whose prayers—outpourings of softened hearts of man, woman, and child—are offered on behalf of one so helpful in her generation!

"Tell me," says the great Saint Chrysostom, "tell me, you who have heard the outburst of acclamation and Godspeed that attends the merciful progress of a Helpful Woman; do you not think that that is something brighter and better than the wearing of any earthly crown—

a crown which can offer no security against either unpopularity or pain?

"And what will it be when, at the last, she hears the note of Heavenly Benedictions borne on lips of companies of Angels sent to bring her on her last journey—and benedictions sweeter still with which she shall be greeted by the King of Angels who has made no promise of entrance into His Heavenly Kingdom to any—save to such only as shall be distinguished by their deeds of Charity!"

So, then, if you desire to partake of such joys as these, you have but to follow in the path marked out for you by the Holy Religion you profess. That Religion will take you out of your easy-chair, and from your cosy, bright boudoir, into the slums, among them that are sick and those that are sad, the lost, the friendless, the despairing! Yes! Visits which you hurried out to pay with a healthy heart-glow of self-approval. No harvests are there so sure or so abundant as those whose sowing has been the work of your own hands on the bare places of human misery and want. That way, therefore, lies your road and there your occupation. Yours will always be the helping hand. Never will you be heard to plead the hardness of the times. Better confess the hardness of the hearts! If you had nothing to spare for the gratification of your fleshly lusts, you would

have plenty to give to the needs of the Poor, and your giving would not only be a donation of certain hard and calculable pieces of gold and silver, but in the kindlier and incalculable coin of comfortable words.

Above all, your hearts and your hands would always be open to those who are too proud and too shy to let their wants be made known unto man, but whose cry and bitter complaint make themselves heard in Heaven. Yes! At all times—but most chiefly at the Great Festivals of the Church, which can never separate Christ from His Poor and which has always associated Almsgiving with Holy Communion.

Thus shall you yourselves become more open to the benign influences of the Sacraments. There from that day forward will you be found every Sunday. The Lord's Day: a Day specially set apart by the Faithful from the earliest times for the collection and presentation of Alms. There, too, on week-days, no less precious, will you be present, when invited by your Pastors to meet together in order that the devotion of your hearts may pass into the donations of your hands; to be received and presented at God's Altar.

Then it shall be yours to say, and to say to some purpose: that the pleasantest day of your life, if not marked by some act of kindness towards the poor and suffering, is for you a

blank day, a day wasted, a day lost! Let us proportion our Alms to our Ability, lest we provoke God to proportion His Blessings to our Alms.

There, therefore, you have the whole of the Christian Religion: "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep himself unspotted from the world."

In a word: To be separate from the world that Sins, and to minister to the world that Mourns.

So shall you attain to the blessed Inheritance of God Himself, Eternal in the Heavens.

Palm Sunday

IV

BLESSED BE THE KING THAT COMETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD

A. VINET

Protestant Professor of French Literature at Lausanne.

Born A.D. 1797. Died A.D. 1847.

PALM SUNDAY

PAST AND PRESENT

37 *And when He was come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen:*

38 *Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.*— S. Luke xix.

"BLESSED BE THE KING THAT COMETH!"

WITH these acclamations the delighted multitude rent the air as Jesus entered the City of Jerusalem. Such was the triumphant reception accorded by the people to this peace-bearing King whose power had been manifested most chiefly in showing mercy and pity.

They were poor and undistinguished, the men and women that formed that throng, quite incapable of making any sumptuous display in honour of Him whom they loved; so they had to content themselves with scattering palm-fronds upon the road before the humble turn-out of Jesus, or with taking off their garments, and spreading them upon the highway of the Son of David: while all of them, in transports of joy and adoration, cried out as they beheld Him: *Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord! Peace in Heaven, and Glory in the Highest!*

If our Lord desired that the act of the woman who poured the precious ointment upon His

feet should be noised abroad throughout the whole world, what wonder, then, that the Gospel History has preserved for us the account of an act still more striking and of greater public import?

This act has not only become fixed permanently in men's minds, but it has taken its place among the events celebrated in the course of our Christian Year. Eight days before Easter we commemorate it on what we call Palm Sunday. On this Day we are present in imagination at the Triumphal Entry of Jesus Christ into the City of David. We, in our turn, scatter palm-fronds in Christ's way. We, too, cry out with those earlier disciples: *Blessed be He that cometh in the Name of the Lord! Peace in Heaven, and Glory in the Highest!*

But before we repeat these words and make them our own, so to say, would it not be wise to ascertain their meaning? Ought we not to make sure that, when they are uttered by our lips, they are said in our hearts? For these utterances are not of those which have little or no definite significance. They are no vague ejaculations which men give vent to without thought or intention. They are words, rather, which, in the opinion of the Disciples, had both a definite object and a precise meaning. Now, it is this object and this meaning which I think it so necessary for us to discover.

We may well suppose that the Multitude, surrounded by which Jesus approached Jerusalem, was composed of a vast variety of individuals. Some, who had been witnesses of His Miracles or objects of His Healing Power, thronged this Benefactor of theirs, whose Character and Mission they had never been able thoroughly to comprehend. Others, impatient of the foreign yoke that was crushing the Jewish Nation, rejoiced to welcome the appearance of this King long-promised by the Prophets: this Liberator under whose Leadership the conquered people were to regain their former independence. But there were others, Brethren—those, I mean, who now recognized in His Manhood, what Simeon had recognized in His cradle. They acknowledged in Jesus of Nazareth something more than a mere temporal benefactor, some one greater than any earthly King. What, then, did they see in Him? Let their own voices answer for them: "*Blessed be the King*," they cry, "*that cometh in the Name of the Lord! Peace in Heaven, and Glory in the Highest!*"

You, poor blind man, whose eyes Jesus has opened! Or you, poor leper, to whom He said, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace!" If you are among this multitude, tell me the meaning of these solemn words with which you hail the coming of Jesus into the Royal City. Is it: Blessed be the King that cometh in the

name of the Lord? Well, others can say the same words without attaching to them the same meaning as you do. They look for a powerful Prince who in the Name of the Lord shall do as Cyrus did of old: rebuild the walls of Sion and restore her ancient prestige. Is that the Man you want? By way of answer, you point to this homely, kindly, accessible Monarch, His ordinary every-day attire, His poor and unarmed following. I can see that you are thinking of another kind of Royalty, of a Kingdom not of this world, and that this King who is come in the Name of the Lord is no competitor of Herod's, no rival of the Cæsars.

So, say your say, you lowly subject of this homely sovereign! Tell me what you think about Him.

All that I have to say, replies this friend of Jesus, is already summed up in these words of welcome; and the last part of them must explain the first. Should I be talking of Peace, if I were thinking of any earthly Monarch, who came to wrest the throne of his ancestors from the occupation of the usurper? No! I should talk of War and not of Peace! And even if it were possible that such a king could bring us peace, it would be only peace on earth, and *I* said, peace in Heaven! Did you imagine that I was looking for some worldly autocrat, and that it was a question of some kingdom that

was to be set up here below? Oh no! The peace my heart is celebrating is made and ratified above. The peace my heart is celebrating is the peace that has been made between man and the Eternal God. For you and I and every one have offended against His Holy Laws and have blurred His Likeness in us. We are self-exiled from His Heart. We have refused to be called His Children. He has ceased to be our Father. A wicked war has been declared on earth against the Majesty of Heaven: a revolt of flesh and spirit; a rebellion of all the senses and of every faculty; a general insurrection of the Human Race against its Creator has been set on foot throughout the world. Said the Senses: "Let us break their bonds asunder and cast away their cords from us." * Reason, too, in its turn, drunk and staggering, asks: "Where is the promise of His coming?"

Pride and self-will cry in defiant unison: "We will not have this man to reign over us." While from the bottom of this hard heart of mine a thousand voices echo the same disloyalty. But, solemn and persistent, there rises another voice above this brawling tumult, persistently upbraiding me for my outrageous conduct, reminding me of God's claims, of His Justice, and of my own failures; making me

* Psalm ii. 3.

clearly to understand that there can be *no* peace for the wicked! Such *was* my condition, one full of doubt and perplexity, often leaving me a prey to the sorest distress of mind. But here I behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Here I count the Price. Here I see the Means. Here is the Way of Reconciliation. This is He that has become the wages of sin: the Mediator who longed to intervene between His Father and Ourselves, who is able to save to the uttermost all them who come to the Father through Him. So the warfare between my Maker and myself has come to an end. A treaty of Peace has been signed in the Palace of the Most High; and therefore I shout in the very joy of my heart: *Peace in Heaven!*

But can this peace which so fills me with joy have been won at the cost of some unworthy concession on the part of Heaven's Majesty? Or can Divine Holiness have suffered defeat in the impious struggle in which I have been engaged? Did God pardon me because He was weak, or weary, or indifferent? Far be such blasphemies from my thoughts! The King of Heaven can sign no dishonourable treaty. When He deigns to pardon, it can never be at the expense of His Justice, or of His Holiness. His reputation as an impartial Ruler, therefore, can have suffered no attaint.

A Restitution of such immense magnificence; a Sacrifice of such stupendous worth; proclaims from one end of Creation to the other that the Eternal Order of things can never be violated with impunity.

The Son of David enters Jerusalem simply that He may die there—that He may be stretched upon the cross which is being made ready for Him—that He may exhibit there and at the same moment, both God's Anger and God's Love.

But more than that. From the Cross to which He is fastened He will draw all men—everything—unto Himself. That Cross is the World's Pulpit. Instrument of torture and of death as it has been in the past, it is destined to become the instrument of man's redemption. The holiness of God is seen again on earth, and, moved by the spectacle, Angels in their Heavenly abode break forth in the same chorus that we are singing here on earth: *Glory in the Highest!*

So, I fancy, might one of those little ones after the flesh have spoken to me, who, either on the Lake of Genesareth or in the streets of Capernaum, or on the way to Jericho, had listened to the voice of Jesus and become obedient unto His Word. Thus do I interpret, to my own satisfaction, at all events, these shouts of joy raised by the multitude at the

sight of Jesus as He goes up to the Holy City. If we put ourselves in their place, Brethren, which ought not to be a very difficult thing for us to do, we shall then be able to understand their emotion. We shall be ready to acknowledge that no words could ever express their feelings: no language utter their delight; and that never had human hearts so thrilled with joy unspeakable!

Brethren, we read in History that the City of Antioch, one of the principal cities of the Roman Empire and the metropolis of the East, having been privy to the overthrow of the statues of the Emperor Theodosius which adorned its streets, became the object of that Prince's ruthless revenge. Its whole life and activity was paralyzed by the crushing severity of his decrees. The prisons were crowded with victims destined for the scaffold. Every day saw fresh acts of violence committed, every hour added to the general dismay; but the resentment of the outraged Prince seemed incapable of being satisfied except by the total destruction of that famous city. Flavien, who was then its Bishop, sacrificing himself for his flock's sake, proceeded to Constantinople in order to face the full fury of the Emperor's displeasure and make an appeal to his mercy. Unexpected good fortune! The heart of that angry monarch is softened by the Bishop's

Christian eloquence, and the words of pardon so earnestly solicited are heard upon the lips of Theodosius. A messenger is at once despatched to Antioch. He speeds upon his errand. He reaches the city. The citizens are gathered at the gates. Before he speaks a word, pardon has already beamed from his eyes. At length his message is delivered. And by that word—that little word—life is restored to a hundred thousand despairing creatures!

A touching incident, Brethren! Yes, after more than Fifteen Centuries our hearts beat faster with a thrill of that same joy which stirred the souls of the men of Antioch, enabling us to realize to-day their feelings on that glad yesterday of theirs!

For such joy as this there is a name. But for that which seeks expression in the solemn shouts which assail the gates of Jerusalem there is none.

The Man who, in humble garb and with lowly pomp, is going up the hill in the midst of that multitude, is a bearer of news: and such news! He likewise announces a respite! He does not say, like Flavien's messenger: "Your lives are prolonged for a few days in this land of exile." But he says: "Ye shall live for ever!" He does not say: "Ye shall behold the Sun." But: "Ye shall see God!" He does not say: "You shall taste the good things of earth before you

die." But: "Ye shall enjoy peace that passeth all understanding! Your godly motions, your heavenly aspirations, your virtuous acts have brought you into fellowship with God Himself, and after a few days' exercising of your faith, these fields of Babylon shall be left behind for ever, and your feet shall enter the Land of your Salvation, the real, the everlasting Canaan!" And this same Messenger, the Bearer of these glad tidings, who is He? Why, He who is also able to fulfil the same. He who is willing as well as able. He by whom all these good things have been procured. He who at the price of His own life, demanded of God the Kingdoms of the world for His inheritance, and who has won them. He who is the All-Precious Offering, the Great Prophet, the Glorious King!

And now, Brethren, I am coming to you. What have you come to Church for here to-day? You have come to celebrate with the great multitude of the Disciples the Lord Jesus Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. You have come to add your Hosannahs to theirs, and to straw your palm-branches along with theirs on your Saviour's path. To-day, which was a Holy day for them, is a Holy day for you as well; but with this one difference, that you have to celebrate in addition nineteen centuries of triumph for the Religion of Jesus which is called the Christ.

A Holy Day? Yes! It is a Holy Day. But the true keeping of any Holy Day or Festival must be in the heart. Now, examine your own, and see if you can find there any of that simple childlike joy which thrilled the hearts of those faithful disciples? Does your heart cry out with theirs: *Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord. Peace in Heaven, and Glory in the Highest?*

To each one of you I leave the responsibility of answering for himself. But I have some other questions to ask, if I may, of my hearers in general.

What, I should like to know, have those persons to rejoice about who do not accept Jesus as a King, coming in the Name of the Lord; but as a vague and enigmatical kind of being, of doubtful rank and dignity, a Professor of a higher standard of morals? Are they glad because the requirements of the moral law have been made more stringent? Do they rejoice because the fetters of duty and obligation with which they were already bound have been made heavier and drawn tighter by Jesus Christ, who has rendered it harder for them to do the Will of God by revealing the largeness of its scope and the keenness of its scrutiny? Are they glad that, while their task has been doubled, the means at their disposal for its performance remain the same as before? Strange reason for

rejoicing on the part of a creature who is daily learning, in small things as in great, the lesson of his own impotence and vileness!

What are *they* glad about on such an occasion, people who have been accustomed for ever so long a time to look upon Christianity as a Divine Religion, but are content to keep it like some sealed letter, full of the best possible news; but never profiting either for their consolation or sanctification by the important announcement it contains?

Custom and respectability bring them to Church to-day as usual. But what have they to rejoice about when they get here? Is it because they belong outwardly and visibly to the Church of Christ? That is certainly an immense advantage, if they profit by it. But those who stop short at this elementary stage, what better are they than those who reject the Gospel? "Is it walls," once asked a Holy Father, "Is it walls that make a Church? Am I a Christian because I live in the midst of Christendom or because I was born in a certain latitude?" I am a Christian, not by virtue of the outward and visible sign in Baptism, but by virtue of the inward and spiritual grace which it conveys. Having my name enrolled in a Parochial Register does not make me a Christian; for Jesus came upon earth not to form Parishes, but to found a Church.

What are they glad about on such a day as this, they who, when they have accepted the boon of respite, consider themselves well within the pale of the Divine Mercy ; but who, while they join their fellow-disciples in crying : *Peace in Heaven ;* fail to add with them : *Glory in the Highest !* What, in other words, have they to rejoice for, who cling to the promises but not to the precepts, who accept God's Mercy but will not obey His Law ; who are willing enough to be saved, but who do not intend to forsake their sin ?

Now, I will tell you what they are glad about, and why they rejoice. They rejoice to see God's *prestige* depreciated to their advantage ; for if mercy were to invalidate law, what would become of God's Glory as a Righteous Governor ? Or do you think that, at any rate, they will love God out of gratitude, and that God would be glorified by their affection ? Nothing of the kind, Brethren. Men really love only where they respect. It would be impossible for me to love a God truly whom I did not respect ; and God could never be the object of my respect if He were to sacrifice for the sake of my salvation one jot or one tittle of that Holy Law which Christ Himself said He was not come to destroy but to fulfil, and which must remain inviolate unto the end. So that, if they do rejoice, their rejoicing is not justified ;

and we might well address them in these Apostolic words: "Your laughter shall be turned into mourning, and your joy into sorrow."

Yes, Brethren, the Christian's feelings cannot find adequate expression save in the fullest significance of these words: *Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord! Peace in Heaven and Glory in the Highest!*

Apart from such sentiments, this Festival, and indeed all our Church Festivals, are but so many empty ceremonies. Yes, if our own hearts are strangers to their promptings, then better give up these Sacred Functions altogether; better not come to Church, better suppress this meaningless display; let our lives be consistent though godless. Or, better still, let us try to foster such feelings as shall enable us to worship in spirit and in truth, and which shall quicken these Festivals into Feasts of Spiritual Refreshment and inward growth.

Let us pray God to instil into our hearts those heavenly longings which alone can give rest to the soul and add worth to the life.

We will receive Christ as those disciples received Him, and as He is: The True God and Everlasting Life.

Seekers after Truth! He is the Key, let me tell you, of all your unsolved problems. The factor that is wanting to complete your system

of Philosophy which you are for ever reconstructing but can never bring to any satisfactory conclusion.

For you, O troubled soul! He is your only Peace. For you who would make the best of this world, He is your storehouse of pleasure and of profit. In Him is found the Answer to the Riddle of Human Life, and the only Vanquisher of Death. Through Him alone are we brought into fit and full relationship with our Creator and the rest of His Creation. Without His mediation we wander through life —the past a chaos, the future a frown; ourselves either the playthings of our passions, or the dupes of our intellect, wasted by infinite longings that nothing can satisfy, driven to fabricate for ourselves with much pains some counterfeit of happiness; tired of life, afraid to die, and still more afraid of judgment: *so*, with neither guide to lead, nor friend to cheer, do we draw near that formidable frontier where earth shall fail from under our feet.

Away with us, therefore, to Him who has worked out our salvation! We will rejoice at His Coming: we will greet Him with the tribute of our tears, and carpet His path with palm-fronds. Those tears shall be wiped away by His own Hand. Those palms shall be our crown in the City of Peace, where, satisfied at the Fountain Head of all Perfection and the

source of everlasting felicity, we shall cry once more, as did the Believers of old: *Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord. Peace in Heaven and Glory in the Highest!*

Holy Week

V

THE SCIENCE OF SUFFERING

BOSSUET

THE
SCIENCE OF SUFFERING

Per patientiam curramus ad propositum nobis certamen, aspicientes in auctorem fidei nostræ et consummatorem Jesum.

Let us run with patience * *the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.*—Heb. xii. 1, 2 (R.V.).

* Patience = the quality of *suffering; endurance.* From Latin, *Patior* = I undergo, endure; which sense is the one insisted upon throughout this Sermon.

PROLOGUE

THE THREE SUFFERERS

ONCE more the wholesome days return when we set up Calvary in all our Churches; when we shall see the blood of the Son of God streaming from all His wounds; days during which the Church, by means of her Hymns, her Exhortations, and her Holy Mysteries, sets forth the Lord's Sufferings and Death so vividly that we may address to each of her assembled children the words written by Saint Paul to the Galatians*: "Before your eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you."

To-day the Church begins to read in the course of her commemoration of the Great Sacrifice, the Story of the Redeemer's Passion.

Let us, therefore, likewise, begin on this first day by filling our minds with this Subject, so that they may never lose sight of it throughout the solemn and touching Services which are

* Gal. iii. 1.

to follow: Services full of a grief that consoles, and of a sorrow so absorbing that it shall turn our sorrow into joy.

Amid these scenes of Crucifixion, Reproach, and Death which now attract our attention, a Christian must be right hard of heart if he cannot for a few days interrupt his round of pleasure in order that he may have leisure to listen to the Story of the pains of Jesus Christ and to learn therefrom how necessary it is for him, too, to suffer.

That is why I have waited for the solemn hours of this Holy Week before proclaiming to you from this place the foundation principle of our Christian Life. It seemed to me that it would have been impossible for me to deal effectively with a doctrine so repulsive, so contrary to the inclination of our flesh, but which forms such an important part of our Religious Faith and Practice—had there been lacking, to lend their weight to my weak words, the dying accents of the Lord, or rather the Voice of His Blood, which speaketh, as Saint Paul says, to so much better purpose than that of Abel.*

Let us take advantage, Christian People, of such a favourable opportunity. Let us try to impress upon our hearts the lesson of the Law of Patience: of *Suffering* and *Endurance:* the

* Heb. xii. 24.

fundamental Law of Christianity. But let us not be rash enough to undertake so great a task without first imploring Heavenly aid through the intercession of Mary.* "*Hail Mary highly favoured! The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women.*"

In the words which I have chosen for my Text you will have observed, Gentlemen, that Saint Paul challenges us to a trial of strength, to a Race which we have to run with *patience;* and that at the same time he advises us to fix our eyes upon Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our Faith: upon Him, that is, who inspires that Faith and who will one day crown it: who is its Commencement and its Consummation: whose hand having laid its foundation will also place its top-stone.

The contest of which the Apostle speaks is one which we must sustain in spite of all the afflictions God may send us; and that we may understand the conditions of a contest the issue of which must decide the question of our salvation, the Apostle exhorts us on God's behalf to keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus Christ—upon Jesus Christ as He hangs upon the Cross.

In that direction it is that he would have us turn our eyes, and he gives his reason: "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our

* See *Appendix.*

faith, who being set upon joy, endured the cross, despising the shame."

Hence we must conclude that in order to understand the rules, conditions, and conduct of this Contest of Patience, our School must be Mount Calvary: our Teacher, Jesus the Christ suffering the penalty of Crucifixion. That is where we are recommended to apply to by the Apostle. Good! We will follow His directions. We will go to Calvary and narrowly observe what passes there.

The Central Object that arrests and absorbs our attention is the Spectacle of Three Men in the pains of capital punishment.

Here, says Saint Chrysostom, we encounter a notable Mystery. We see Three Men hanging upon Three Crosses:

i. A SAVIOUR.
ii. A MAN WHO IS TO BE SAVED.
iii. A MAN WHO IS TO BE LOST.

(1) A Man offering Salvation. (2) A Man accepting Salvation. (3) A Man rejecting Salvation.

(1) A Just Man—a Volunteer, whose unmerited suffering appeals for the pardon of all who suffer justly. (2) A Guilty Man suffering with patience, who becomes converted, and who receives upon the cross his Passport to Paradise. (3) A Guilty Man suffering impatiently, on whom the pains of Hell are getting hold already.

In the midst: THE AUTHOR OF ALL GRACE. On *this* side: *A Man who is profiting by it.* On *that: A Man who turns away from it.*

In the midst: MAN AT HIS BEST. On one side: *A Believer and Imitator.* On the other: *Man at his worst*: *A Rebel and Blasphemer.*

A Man who has done nothing amiss.

A Penitent Sinner.

A Hardened Reprobate.

Startling Contrast! Astonishing Discrepancy! Both of these men are on the cross beside Jesus Christ. Both are fellow-sufferers of His. And yet, Alas! only one of them is to be His Companion in Glory!

This is a sight which should teach us something. Let us keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus—Beginner and Fulfiller of our Faith. Watch how He discharges Three Important Functions. He suffers patiently Himself. He crowns the man that suffers with the like temper. He judges the man who suffers in an opposite spirit. This is a thing we should do well to meditate upon; for if we learn this lesson intelligently and get to know things as they are, our education will leave nothing to be desired as regards the Science of Suffering.

In a word we may reduce to Three Points all that we ought to know about this important matter.

First: As to what the Law of Suffering really is.

Secondly: How Jesus Christ holds in His arms those who associate themselves with Him in His sufferings.

Thirdly: With what rigour He treats those who will not bow beneath His almighty arm when He smites them with the rod of His correction.

To-Day, therefore, Gentlemen—To-Day let us learn the Lesson of these Three Sufferers, whose several circumstances are so widely divergent, and whose conduct in the contrasts it will present, shall teach us Three Paramount Truths.

I. Let us learn from that Man who is suffering but who has done nothing amiss, how necessary it is for all of us who are *guilty* to suffer.

II. Let us learn from the man who is suffering and who becomes converted, the wholesomeness of suffering when borne patiently.

III. Let us learn from the man that is suffering, but who suffers impatiently and with a hardened heart, the sure and certain mark of reprobation in all those who suffer but are not resigned.

And since These Three Truths embrace, if I mistake not, the whole teaching of Christianity with regard to suffering, I shall make use of them as my Division of this Subject.

PART I

THE SCIENCE OF SUFFERING:

THE MAN WHO HAS DONE NOTHING AMISS

PART I

THE MAN WHO HAS DONE NOTHING AMISS

IT was the good pleasure of our Heavenly Father that His will should be first written and put forth in the Person of Jesus the Christ. We must fashion our lives, it is true, according to the Gospel. But the Gospel was formed and fashioned on and in Jesus Christ Himself. "He spake in deeds," says the Scripture, "before He spake in words." He practised first that which He afterwards prescribed; and to such good purpose that His Word has become our Law. But the first Law that He gave was that of His most Holy Life. He is our Master and Teacher; but not before He had become our Pattern.

In order that we may thoroughly comprehend this fundamental truth, we must bear in mind that the First and Foremost Mystery of the Christian Religion is that *God determined to make Himself like unto Man*, in order to place

Man under the obligation of becoming like unto God. His design was to copy *us* in the truth and reality of our Human Nature; to the end that we might copy *Him* in the Holiness of His Divine Nature. He took our Flesh that we might take His Spirit. In fact, we were His Pattern in the Mystery of the Incarnation in order that He might be ours in the whole transaction of His after life.

Here we have a flood of light pouring in for the elucidation of the Truth I am stating: namely, the necessity of Suffering; but it is of importance to you, Gentlemen, that this Truth should be established on an immovable basis; and nowhere can we find any such basis, if we look for it outside the pages of Holy Scripture.

That in the Mystery of His Incarnation the Son of God did take us for His Model, I learn from Saint Paul in that Divine Epistle to the Hebrews:* "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren." *Debuit per omnia fratribus similiari.* And again; and more plainly still:† "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same."

* Heb. ii. 17. The Epistle to the Hebrews is not universally accepted as Saint Paul's. The *thoughts* appear to be his, but the phraseology another's.

† Heb. ii. 14.

Quia ergo pueri communicaverunt carni et sanguini, et ipse similiter participavit eisdem.

Thus you see clearly how He took us for His model in His Blessed Incarnation.

But why should He have done so, Christian People, if it were not that He in His turn might become *our* Pattern? For since it is natural for men to receive certain impressions from what they see; so should *we* judge that, finding among ourselves a God determined to make Himself like unto us, *our* object lesson must be none other than Himself.

For verily He took not on Him the Nature of Angels; * and that, for several reasons, of which the following are not the least important ones. Not of Angels, because it was not His intention to set an Example to Angels. *But He took the Seed of Abraham,* because He wished to serve as an Example to the Race sprung from that Patriarch. Not his race after the Flesh, but after the Spirit: a Race that should follow in the Footsteps of his Faith; as says the same Apostle in another place: † *The father of circumcision to them who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham which he had in uncircumcision;* that is to say, if we take him rightly, to the Children of the New Covenant. Consequently, Christian People, we possess in Jesus

* Heb. ii. 16. † Rom. iv. 12.

the Christ a Living Law and a Human Exemplar. Not to wish to be like Jesus Christ is not to wish to be a Christian. And that is why the whole of Scripture tells us that His Life and His Conduct are to be the pattern of ours; insomuch that we are called upon to imitate the Saints only so far as they themselves are imitators of Jesus the Christ. And never would Saint Paul have dared to say with such Apostolic boldness: *Be ye imitators of me;* had he not added immediately: *Even as I am of Christ:* Imitatores mei estote sicut et ego Christi.* And again, to the Thessalonians: *Ye became imitators of us,* Imitatores nostri facti estis. Then he adds, *and of the Lord,* et Domini; to make us understand how great an Exemplar the Christian scheme of life proposes to us, and how little worthy of that Name any such scheme is, until founded upon and regulated by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Now do not imagine that I am here setting before you any impossible task.

In judging of an original painting we look for two things: The Perfection of the Whole and of the Details. As for the *Copy*—it should be faithful in its reproduction of the details; though we may not expect to find that corporate beauty which distinguishes the Original. In like manner I am not saying that you will be able to attain

* 1 Cor. xi. 1.

to the ripe perfection of Jesus Christ. There will always remain a supreme degree of excellence, the exclusive property of the Grand Original. I only say that you are bound to reproduce Its special characteristics, and to see that your conduct is in harmony with Its design.

Applying the illustration to our own case: We are under an obligation to follow as closely as possible, in our copy of the Saviour, the Rule which He observed when He made Himself like unto us. As He made Himself in every human particular like unto His Brethren, so should His Brethren grow like unto Him in every particular of His ideal character. Sin alone excepted, He took (as says the Apostle) all our weaknesses. We therefore ought to take all His Virtues. He clothed Himself with all the reality of our Flesh, and we must clothe ourselves (as far as human capacity allows) with the whole reality of His Spirit; because, as the Apostle goes on to say, he that hath not His Spirit is none of His.

And now it is time to inquire what was the Spirit of Jesus Christ? His mind? His longing? Well, little as we may be in the habit of consulting the pages of Holy Writ, we cannot fail to perceive at a glance that the spirit of Jesus was strong and eager: feeding upon pain, feasting upon affliction. That is why He is spoken of

by the Prophet* as A Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief: *Virum dolorum et scientem infirmitatem.*

Might we not say, Christian People, that the Eternal Wisdom in coming into the world was reduced to the point of knowing nothing but suffering? The Prophet speaks, if I mistake not, of a knowledge that should be experimental, and he means, if we understand him aright, that among all the various objects which present themselves to our human sensual perception, Jesus the Christ tasted none that was pleasant, and that He desired to limit His experience to what was bitter and disappointing, troublesome, and painful: A Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. *Virum dolorum et scientem infirmitatem.*

And so there was not any part of Him that escaped the rigours of some exquisite pang; for He longed to become an Expert in the terrible science He had come into the world to learn: I mean the Science of Suffering: *Virum dolorum et scientem infirmitatem.* A Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And verily, Good Souls! It is so strictly true that He was born to suffer, that that formed His whole business and occupation. No sooner did He approach the term of His suffering than He began to think of the End of His Life. I

* Isa. liii. 3.

am not speaking at random, and it is easy to convince you that what I say is true by an appeal to a remarkable circumstance recorded by Saint John, an eyewitness.

This Man of Sorrows, still hanging upon the Cross—worn out—done for—all but dead—reckons that He has suffered all that the Prophets had said He was to suffer, with the one exception of drinking a certain bitter draught which was to be offered to Him when He was athirst. So, loth to lose one drop of the Chalice of His Passion, He asks for it with a loud voice: *Sciens Jesus omnia consummata sunt, ut consummaretur Scriptura, dixit, Sitio.** After this, Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the Scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst. And then, after this last sup of bitterness, this last outrage with which the implacable hatred of His enemies heaped up the agony of His dying moments—seeing that the Programme of Suffering drawn up by an Eternal Decree contains no further item,—He cries: "It is done!" "It is finished!" There is nothing left for Me to suffer.

* "Probably the meaning is that Jesus now permitted Himself to express His sense of bodily suffering (*I thirst*) because He knew that His duty was completely discharged and properly fulfilled. The word translated *accomplished* is more comprehensive and conclusive than the word usually applied to the fulfilment of prophecy."—The Century Bible, St. John xix. 28.

Man of Sorrows, who wouldest bear the load of our infirmities—the supply of human suffering has run out! Your education is complete; your experience full and exhaustive; you have touched the uttermost goal of human endurance and tasted every variety of pain! You may die now, as soon as you please!

And, in fact, He just bowed His Head and gave up the ghost. So that how long He had to live was determined by how much He had to suffer.

Ah! Christian People, you seem moved! Yet I must add one further particular that you may estimate fully the keenness of His appetite for Suffering.

The truth is He desired to suffer much more than was necessary for the redemption of our human nature;* and for this reason. Had He limited Himself to the suffering demanded of His patience by the expiation of our offences, He would have failed to give an adequate idea of the high esteem He entertained for suffering; and we might have imagined that He regarded it rather as a necessary evil than as a desirable good. That is why it was not enough that He should die for our sakes; thus paying the full penalty due to God; the penalty exacted by

* According to Theologians, the Redemption of our Nature demanded, strictly speaking, but an act of obedience on the part of one who was both God and Man.

Him from the Common Victim of All Sinners to satisfy the outraged majesty of His Law. Not to be too entirely absorbed in the serious discharge of a duty—namely, that of paying His debts—He will have an eye to pleasure: what was pleasure to Him, at least: *The ecstacy of suffering.* As has been so admirably said by the famous Priest of Carthage:* He wished before He died to indulge in a surfeit of Suffering: *Saginari voluptate patientiæ discessurus volebat.*

Might we not say, Brethren, in accordance with the suggestion of this celebrated Christian Author, that the Saviour's whole life was a Banquet at which every dish was seasoned with the myrrh of suffering? A strange kind of Banquet, judged by Epicurean standards; but one that our Lord found quite to His taste. His *Death* would have sufficed for our salvation; but it was not enough to satisfy His lust for suffering. There lacked the Scourging, and the Blood that dripped from the scratches and the scars of His Crown of Thorns, besides all the new and never-before-dreamed-of pangs inflicted by the panoply of hatred; so that once more in the words of Tertullian: He died surfeited with the sweets of suffering:† *Saginari voluptate patientiæ discessurus volebat.*

* Tertullian in his Treatise on Patience or Suffering.

† *Saginari* means to be crammed as stall-fed animals.

Well, what think you, Gentlemen? Is the Law of Suffering writ large enough upon our Model? Look at Jesus! At Jesus, Author and Fulfiller of our Faith, as He lingers through His long hours of painful endurance!

Of those wound-wombs are you born. Your babe-life in Christ is the fruit of those Birth-Pangs. The Grace that is sanctifying you, the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, pours with His life-blood from those lacerated veins. Children of Blood! Offspring of Pain! Am I to believe that you think your souls can be saved by nursing them in the lap of luxury?

Luxury has become an Art, a Science; though, after all, the enjoyment to be got out of it is more apparent than real. How to avoid with the most scrupulous care the slightest discomfort or inconvenience is a study which betokens good breeding, and which will distinguish us from the common herd. It guarantees our being numbered among the—Somebodies!

Sad testimony this to the corruption of our Christian manners! To pretend to a place among the Saved without bearing the remotest likeness to the Saviour! You have turned your deaf ear to Saint Peter, who reminds you, "That even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps."* And to Saint

* 1 Peter ii. 21.

Paul, who says,* That we must be made conformable to His Death, if we would attain to the Resurrection of the dead. And are you deaf, also, to Jesus Christ, bidding you, if you would serve under His Banner, take up your cross, as He took up His?

And now for a reason which should convince us if we be true comrades of Jesus Christ. Do you not see, Christian People, that the longing He has for the bearing of pain cannot be satisfied, if He do not suffer throughout His whole Body, and in all His members? Now we are His Body. We are His Members: flesh of His Flesh, bone of His Bone, as says the Apostle.† So that Saint Paul does not hesitate to say ‡ that there is a considerable lack in our Lord's sufferings if He do not suffer in every member of His mystical frame.

Let us fathom this Great Mystery. Let us sound the depths of this significant suggestion. When Jesus Christ suffers, He sums us all up in His own Person. We become, if I may say so, more His Body than His Body itself! *We* are His Members more than His very Members themselves are! Every one that has the Spirit of Charity, and that possesses the instincts of a true Christian, will understand my meaning. That which takes place in His divine Body should further be accomplished in ourselves.

* Phil. iii. 10. † Eph. v. 30. ‡ Col. i. 24.

Survey the Body of Jesus! From the sole of the foot even unto the Head there is no soundness in it.* It is full of wounds and bruises and stains of blood. But there, in the Garden of Olives, before His executioners have laid their sacrilegious hands upon Him, see how the Blood is streaming from every pore, tinting His whole Body with the glow of that unearthly sweat; which means to say, Gentlemen, that the church which is His Body, that the Faithful who are His Members, must drip with blood, bearing about imprinted upon them the Marks of His Cross and of His Sufferings.

"But what do you mean?" you will ask me. Must we revive our Neros and Domitians and other persecutors of the Christian Name? Must we depend upon their cruel edicts, in obedience to which and in response to popular clamour the Christians were sacrificed—in order that Jesus may have His tale of Blood? God forbid, Brethren, that the world should ever again become so much the enemy of the Truth as to persecute it with such malicious and manifold cruelty!

When we humbly bear the afflictions God sends us, that is so much blood shed for the Saviour: our resignation standing us instead of Martyrdom. So that without setting up again the Wheel and the Rack on which the limbs of

* Isa. i. 6.

our Forefathers were stretched and broken, we need have no fear, Gentlemen, that material will lack for the exercise of our patience. Human Nature is still weak enough and to spare for the purpose!

Should God lay His Hand upon our Home and take away from us parents, relations, or others bound to us by ties no less tender; then, if we suffer in patience the ache of a sick sad heart as it mourns its Beloved in the Lord—that, too, is our blood which we give to the Saviour; and since it has often been observed that in Holy Scripture our love for our corruptible wealth is called our flesh and blood; so, when we root out this affection which will yield to nothing but sheer force—it is, once more, blood given to the Lord.

Doctors tell us (so I have heard at least) that our tears and our sweat are formed of the same material as our blood. It does not concern me curiously to inquire whether this be so or not; but I say that with the Lord Jesus our tears and our sweat *count* as blood. By our sweat, Christian People, I mean those works of ours done out of love for Him—not done slovenly, carelessly, or idly—but of set purpose and with noble self-endeavour. Work, then, for His Glory! Whether it be the founding of some Institution for the well-being of the Poor, or some other way of furthering His Cause; let us work with

all our might and with all our enthusiasm, holding it for certain that the sweat which streams from us in doing such good work is blood given for the Lord.

But without straying beyond the limits of our own inner life, what blood can be more acceptable to our Saviour Jesus than that of our repentance? Blood wrung from our hearts and streaming from our eyes in sorrow for our misdeeds: the Blood, that is, of bitter tears which Saint Augustine calls the blood of our souls: flowing in God's sight at poignant thought of our ingratitude. It is nothing less than our blood that we are shedding for love of Him.

Yet, why should I thus particularize so minutely the various opportunities of suffering which present themselves so readily without our seeking after them? Yes, Brethren; without disturbing the repose of departed tyrants, material will never lack for the exercise of our patience. Human Nature has frailty enough and to spare. Business is never without its worries. The world abounds in wrong and robbery. Its smiles are as little to be trusted as ever. The opinions and judgments of men can scarcely be more odd or man's temper more uneven and provoking; so much so that it is not merely the teaching of Holy Scripture, but the experience of our every-day life, which imposes upon us the Law of Suffering.

We have nothing to do but to take care that we gain as much spiritual profit from it all as should satisfy our ambition as Christian Athletes; and that is what I have to show in the Second Part.

PART II

THE SCIENCE OF SUFFERING:

THE PATIENT AND PENITENT SUFFERER

PART II

THE PATIENT AND PENITENT SUFFERER

WHEN, Christian People, we see Jesus Christ coming out of the sepulchre crowned with honour and glory, the light of Immortality gleaming from His wounds and shedding its radiance over His whole Body; then we are made to understand the splendid advantage to be reaped from a right use of suffering.

At all events, Jesus does not wait for that day to dawn before teaching us this truth experimentally. Without coming down from His Cross, He undertakes to show us by means of an unique example, the consolations enjoyed by those who suffer patiently.

But seeing that such an example could not be afforded us in His own Sacred Personality; which, on the contrary, must, until the moment of death, furnish us with an instance of absolute abandonment—what the prescribed order of His

procedure and experience forbids Him to offer us in His own Person; *that*, Gentlemen, He exhibits in the person of the Penitent Thief whom He inspires, by means of suffering, with sentiments essentially those of Christian Piety, and which He at once rewards; pronouncing with His own lips the promise of an Eternal Recompense: *Hodie mecum eris*—"TO-DAY THOU shalt be with ME." *

I have no intention of proving to you in so many words that God loves afflicted souls with a strong and particular affection. To ignore this fact a man must be devoid of any spark of true Christian instinct; but in order that our minds may profit by the knowledge of this fact, I shall try to make you see from Holy Scripture some of the causes of this love. And the first that presents itself is the grief and sorrow of a contrite heart.

Certain it is, Good People, that a humble and contrite heart in recalling its faults, does offer to God an acceptable sacrifice; an offering of sweeter savour than that of all earth's most fragrant odours. It is a sacrifice, moreover, that can never be offered to better purpose than in the days of our affliction. For we find by experience that a hardened, impenitent heart, which during the time of its prosperity never perhaps gave a thought to its past faults,

* S. Luke xxiii. 43.

generally begins to confess them when the dark hour of affliction comes.

Another reason is no less plain. It is that within the inner chamber of our consciences there lurks a certain secret instinct of Divine Justice which makes it clear to us by the light that strikes athwart our darkness, that with a God so kind as ours is, Innocence can have nothing to fear; and that it is so natural to Him to act as the Benefactor of His Creatures, that He would never do any harm to anybody if the fact of Sin did not oblige Him to do so. Thus, the hardened sinner who, giddy with the world's applause, never thinks of his crimes; and who imagines that, because he has forgotten them all, God must have forgotten them too:* the moment such an one is smitten, then the sense of Divine Justice is awakened in his conscience, and, moved by the fear of judgment, he confesses with bitter remorse the disorder of his past life.

Now that is just what happened to our Penitent Thief as he hung on his cross. He hears his fellow-malefactor blaspheming, and, becoming reasonably astonished that their actual suffering had not already brought him humbly to bear this stroke of Divine Justice, "What!" cries he, "Seeing that you are condemned, has

* "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten; he hideth his face; he will never see it."—Ps. x. 11.

not this pain and torment taught you to fear God by this time?" *Neque tu times Deum quod in eadem damnatione es?*

Observe how his pains reawake the fear of God in his conscience, and recall the vision of future judgment. That is what has brought him to confess his sins. "As for us two," continues this worthy sufferer, "if *we* are severely punished, our doings have richly deserved it." *Et nos quidem digna factis recipimus.*

Notice how he humbles himself, how he kisses the Hand that smites him, how he accepts and worships the righteous judgment that chastises him. It is the sole means of changing that judgment into mercy; for our God, Christian People, who has no pleasure in the death of any living man, but who is ever turning over in His mind some new plan for man's conversion and for bringing him to reason, only smites us in this life with a view of humbling us under His Almighty Hand and of reducing us to the level of penitents. Right glad is He, too, if the first stroke of the lash prevents His stretching forth His arm to deal us a final blow.

Let us rouse ourselves, therefore, Dear Brethren, at this first onslaught of Divine Vengeance. Down with us! Down with us even to the ground! And let us cry aloud to God from the depths of our contrite hearts: "We indeed justly!" *Et nos quidem digna factis recipimus.*

Justus es Domine! For Thou, O Lord, art just.

But to pass on.

We must fix our eyes on Jesus, Author and Finisher of our Faith! We must imitate this happy, highly favoured Thief, who, having passed sentence upon himself as a malefactor, turns his head with a loving, wondering look at his Innocent Fellow-Sufferer. "And *this* Man," he asks, "what evil has *He* done?" *Hic vero quod mali gessit?*

This unanswered reflection soothes his pain. For as long as This Just Man continues to suffer how can the guilty complain? These two subjects might occupy our thoughts during the hours of our affliction:—Jesus Christ and Ourselves. Our Guilt and His Innocence. He suffered as we are suffering; but while He resigned Himself to suffer out of pity for others, *we* are bound to submit to the inexorable demands of *Justice.*

O Sinners! Let us in our turn suffer out of love for this Just Man; and in return for His Compassion which prompted our rescue, but which exposed Him to such unspeakable suffering; let us accept the chastisement laid upon us by the Hand of Justice—the Hand that corrects, but the Hand also that tends and spares.

With such reflections as these, we may take

Heaven by force and unbar the Gates of Paradise: "To-Day—with Me!" Yes; that is a well-pleasing sacrifice! That is an offering of sweet savour!

But affliction, Brethren, serves not only to bring our failings to remembrance. It acts as a refiner's fire in which our spiritual vitality is tried, and by which it is rendered worthy, even in God's own sight; being brought up to the standard of the life to come. That our virtue must be tried like gold in the furnace is a truth well known, and often insisted upon in Holy Writ, and that we may appreciate the full significance of the illustration, we must remember that the fire does two things for the gold: *It tests it, and it establishes its genuineness.* It purifies and refines it; and that is what affliction accomplishes, and to much better purpose, for Christian Character. Indeed, I do not hesitate to say, that until virtue has been tested in the crucible of affliction, we can never feel sure of it, nor can it be relied upon. For just as a soldier's worth cannot be determined until he has stood fire, so Christian Character, not being intended for mere outward show or effect, but for work and warfare, cannot either know or be sure of itself so long as it has never borne the brunt of battle with its ghostly enemy. That is why Saint Paul the Apostle declares that he dare not begin to hope on this head

before the period of strife has been gone through —"Patience," he writes, "worketh experience;* and experience †, hope."

Now, the Apostle had two good reasons for thus writing. True Godliness expects and awaits everything from God, who is its source; but it cannot expect to receive anything from Him until it has become such as He deems worthy of His gifts. Now, we can never judge whether our Christian Character is approved and accepted by God before it has submitted to the test that He has appointed. And that test is Suffering.

So long, therefore, Christian People, as the ordeal of Suffering or Affliction has not been undergone, our hope as Christians must ever remain vague and doubtful; for the sureness of the foundation as well as the steadfastness of hope in the case of Christian Character, must depend upon its having been drilled and disciplined by suffering. What expectation can a soldier cherish whose captain will not deign to put his mettle to the proof? But, on the other hand, when once his skill and courage have been exercised and matured in the discharge of exacting duties, then he may hope to rise.

O Piety of the delicate and dainty sort, nursed in luxury, and that has never tasted affliction's bitter cup! I hear you discussing your own hereafter. I hear you laying claim to some

* Rom. v. 4. † Probation.

immortal crown! But you must not reverse the Apostle's order: "*Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.*" So that if you are indulging the hope of glory, come and let us put you to the test which God applies to all His servants.

Here comes the Storm! Away fly all your earthly riches! Insult, Disappointment, Illness, swoop down upon your luckless head! What! Poor disillusioned Piety! Have you actually fallen to murmuring? Have you given in already, O frail and baseless Make-Believe! Begone! You were never worthy of the name of Christian. You were never anything but a bit of brave outside! A lacquered surface, glittering in the sunshine, but vanishing in the fire, disappearing in the crucible! You did well enough to deceive short-sighted folk with, by your shining exterior, but for the purposes of God, or for the needs of the Great Hereafter, you are worthless!

True Christian virtue not only survives the furnace-fires of affliction, but is, moreover, purified and refined thereby; and if we were but a little exercised in the science of self-knowledge, we should easily perceive how sadly we have need of those scavenger-flames.

We are apt to complain and to wonder why a Bosom Friend, a Son, a Wife, a Husband—the very light and sweetness of our life—is taken

from our side. What harm could there have been in loving them with love so sane and wholesome? Let such murmurs as these be never heard on the lips of Christian man or woman; for no Christian can be unaware how much there is of fleshly alloy even in the most natural affection: and I use the word "fleshly" not in its narrower sense of what is bodily, but in its wider biblical sense of all that is temporal, worldly, selfish.

The purity of our gold, or, in other words, the perfection of our Christian Character, suffers from the base alloy of these degrading and disintegrating aims and interests.

Did you but know, O Human Heart! how easily you are taken captive by the world, how quickly you can be wooed and won—you would exclaim: "Kind Hand, that strikes to break my bonds! Blessed Troubler of my sensual peace—peace that allows the stealthy entanglement of even the most virtuous soul in the coils of a too eager, too engrossing affection for things temporal; whose growth is all the more dangerous because it has been imperceptible!" Even should our virtue still survive, it will have lost almost all its pureness and delicacy through the presence of this alloy. It is high time to fling it into the crucible that there the base metal may be burnt away.

And if so—how? In such sort, answers

Saint Augustine, that a man may find out by the *loss* of his goods how much he sinned in the *love* of them.*

When the messenger arrives with the news that his house is burnt; that a fortune is irretrievably lost through some unforeseen commercial crisis, then the heart of the worldling sinks within him, and the soreness of the blow makes him aware how deeply the cancer-growth has struck its roots into his soul, and how far the vicious attachment to temporal riches has led him out of the right path: *Quando amando peccaverunt perpendo senserunt.*

The grossness of his love shall appear in the grievousness of his loss. Such an experience, moreover, will make him know to better account the frailty and evanescence of things temporal, of which no amount of preaching would ever have convinced him. Amid their sudden wreck and ruin he will be more disposed to consider things eternal, whose importance he had perhaps begun to overlook. Thus the lesser evil will prove the cure or even the prevention of greater. This plunge into the furnace of affliction, this loss of all that could not stand its purgatorial fires, will leave his character more single-minded, more earnest, and more thorough. Now, if it be true that Christian virtue is thus purified by suffering, then, Good People, we

* "City of God," Bk. I.

may be sure that God, who loves nothing so well as singleness of heart, and who longs to be Himself the sole and central Object of all our affections—we may be sure that He can never look upon anything so good and Heavenly as virtue which has been thus tried and purified.

But if you would learn this truth as it is enforced by experience and by experiment, *then* fix your eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your Faith; noticing how He treats this highly favoured Thief whose example has been already set before you.

But mark, above all, to what a rare degree of maturity his virtue has been carried by the good use made of those precious moments of pain and anguish. For although the Beginning of his Conversion does but date from the Ending of his Life, we perceive in him, illumined by extraordinary rays of Grace, a perfect pattern of patience and an example of the ripest virtue.

Already you have watched him as he acknowledges and adores the justice of the stroke that has felled him to the ground. You have seen how it produced in him every symptom of true Godliness, and worked out the whole process of faith.

Note, now, the sequel of his story. Not content with vindicating the Innocence of Jesus, against whom was arrayed an angry world in

arms, he turns, Christian People, to his Fellow-Sufferer, and utters his heart's desire: "*Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom.*" *

Brethren, my heart beats fast—I could leap for joy—when I see this man's Faith! A dying man sees Jesus dying and turns to Him to ask for life! A crucified man watching the crucifixion of Jesus, talks to Him about His Kingdom! Where his eyes behold nothing but crosses, his faith sees only a Throne! Was there ever such faith, such hope as his? We Christian People, when we come to die, know that Jesus lives, and even so our faltering faith can scarcely believe in Him! This man is not only dying himself, but sees Jesus dying too! And yet he trusts Him—Yes, Gentlemen—even in that appalling hour of confusion and collapse —that hour when "His Own" have all forsaken Him and fled, and when there was left but this one faithful soul who could perceive the Glory of His Cross! His faith begins to bloom when the faith of Apostles even is withered away. While the Disciples are forsaking Him whom they know to be the Author of Life, this man takes his Fellow-Sufferer and his Comrade in the hour of death to be his Lord and Master. Worthy indeed, says Saint Augustine, to hold high rank among martyrs, since he alone is

* S. Luke xxiii. 42.

left to do for Jesus what it is the duty of the chiefs of that Noble and Victorious Army to do for Him!

You are amazed, are you not, Christian People, to see him so highly exalted at one stroke; but the reason is this: That religion and piety make rapid strides through the profitable use of affliction, whereby the sufferer has learnt the inestimable advantage of suffering together with Jesus Christ. This it is which at one step promoted our much-to-be-envied Robber to so high a pitch of perfection, and which wins for him from the lips of Jesus those most sweet and comfortable words: *Verily I say unto thee, To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.* TO-DAY —what Promptitude! WITH ME—what Company! IN PARADISE—what Rest!

Fain would I end here with this consoling utterance; with this wonderful example of humility and patience afforded by this Godly Thief, and of goodness and loving kindness on the part of the Son of God.

But there are hearts of flint, upon which Christian Kindness produces no effect. To influence such as these we must show them the terrible example and experience of him who became the object of Divine wrath because he suffered with an impenitent and hardened heart.

And with that I shall conclude

PART III

THE SCIENCE OF SUFFERING:

THE IMPATIENT AND IMPENITENT SUFFERER

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THE IMPATIENT AND IMPENITENT SUFFERER

CERTAIN it is, Christian People, that the prosperity of the wicked and the immunity from punishment which emboldens and intoxicates them to the extent even of overlooking the fact that they must die, is the beginning of that retribution by means of which, having given them over to their brutal and unbridled passions, God allows them to heap to themselves wrath—as the Holy Apostle writes—against that day of wrath and of implacable vengeance.

But while we observe in Holy Scripture that God can, when He pleases, punish the wicked by means of apparent peace and prosperity; the same Holy Scripture, that cannot lie, teaches us that He does not always punish them in this way; but that sometimes he lets them feel the weight of His Holy Arm in scenes of blood and horror.

Plague-hardened Pharaoh, harlot-eyed Jezebel,

blood-guilty Ahab, and not to leave our present subject, this impenitent, blaspheming thief, bear testimony, Christian People, to the truth of what I am saying; making it clear to us that the Cross which, if we will have it so, is a pledge of mercy, may be turned into an instrument of retribution.

So true it is, says Saint Augustine, that what we have to consider is not the nature of our sufferings, but the spirit in which we bear them; for the afflictions God sends us may easily change their character and effect, according to the attitude we adopt towards them.

Men of hardened and impenitent heart, who suffer without becoming converted, begin their Hell in this world, presenting us with a vivid representation of what the terrors of the damned must be.

If, Christian People, you would have a realistic vision of those glowing gulfs where the souls of the lost do moan and are sore vexed, you need not recall any childish notions of burning fiery furnaces or of sulphurous mountains whose entrails are the womb and cradle of everlasting fires, and whose craters vomit dense smoke-clouds shot with flame, such as Tertullian aptly describes as the chimney-stacks of Hell—*ignis inferni fumariola.*

If you wish to have a lively picture, a *tableau vivant* of Hell, then find some human being

afflicted but unconverted. The essential characteristic of Hell, in short, is not mere suffering, but suffering unaccompanied by repentance; for I notice two kinds of fire spoken of in Holy Writ: a fire that Cleanses, and a fire that Consumes. The latter I find mentioned in the Thirtieth Chapter of Isaiah; * where the Prophet speaks of the Name of the Lord coming from afar, burning with His anger: "His lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire." The former in Saint Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians: † "The fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he build thereon, he shall receive a reward."

The fire that consumes is called in the Gospel—"fire unquenchable," ‡ in order to distinguish it from the fire provided for our purification, and which always goes out when its work has been duly accomplished.

Pain, when accompanied by penitence, is a fire which purifies us; but pain without penitence is a fire that consumes and devours us; and that is just the fire of Hell.

Hence we conclude that the flames of Purgatory purify the soul, because when pain is joined with penitence its flames are purgative and cleansing; and, on the other hand, we learn

* Ver. 27. † Chap. iii. 13 (R.V.).
‡ S. Matt. iii. 12.

that the Fire of Hell does but consume the soul, because instead of resulting in the compunction of penitence, it leads to nothing but rage and despair.

So that, Christian People, there should be no spectacle in the world calculated to fill us with such horror as that of men smitten by the Hand of God and at the same time impenitent. No! There can be nothing more horrible than that: for in them we perceive already every symptom characteristic of the damned.

Such were those spoken of by the Prophet * as presenting a monstrous spectacle,—namely: Persons afflicted by God but who felt no compunction—*Dissipati sunt, nec compuncti:* "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction." A set of disobedient, self-willed servants, rebelling under the smart of the rod; stricken but unreformed, brought down but not humbled, chastened but unconverted.

Such was rebellious Pharaoh, who hardened his heart day by day under the ever-increasing severity of the strokes dealt by the Lord's avenging Hand.

Such are they concerning whom it is written in the Apocalypse, that when smitten of God with terrible plagues, they bit their tongues and

* Jer. v. 3.

blasphemed the God of Heaven, while of repentance they showed no sign.

Do not such men as that resemble the Damned; whose Hell began here before our eyes in order to frighten us by their example—to whom the Cross is perdition, as it was to the Impenitent Thief? Robbed of the good things of this life by others, they have robbed themselves of the good things of the life to come; so, baulked at every turn, their last card played, mad with rage and driven to despair, they cry out against God with tongues full of reproach and blasphemy. It would seem, says Salvien,* as if their crimes increased with their punishment, so that the penalty for old sins becomes the parent of new ones: "*Ut crederes pœnam ipsorum criminum quasi matrem esse vitiorum.*"

Be advised, therefore, Sinful Men and Women, that to suffer much is not enough; for the commonly accepted rule that those who have suffered a great deal here may on that account look for immunity hereafter, does not always hold good, because of the hardness of our hearts. Many there are, hanging upon the cross, who are a long way off from the Crucified. For some the cross is a Means of Grace. For others it becomes an instrument of retribution. Of those two men fastened to it on either side of Jesus the Saviour, one found mercy, the other the

* Fifth Century.

rigours of justice. The one worked out his salvation upon it; the other began to taste the bitterness of damnation there. The cross uplifted the Patience of the one to Paradise; the impenitence of the other it cast down to Hell.

Have a care, therefore, lest amid your sufferings—instead of passing through the flames that purify you here on earth, you are but setting light to fires that shall consume you throughout all Eternity!

But you, O Children of God! No matter what calamity may overtake you, never imagine that God has forgotten or forsaken you! Never believe that you are lost among the multitude of them that do evil. No! Though you may be mixed up with them—wasted by the same wars—carried off by the same pestilences—regarded with the same ill-favour—buffeted by the same tempests—*The Lord knoweth them that are His.** He is well able to pick out His Own in the general confusion.

The fire that establishes the sterling quality of the Gold will burn up the straw. The same movement of the air, remarks Saint Augustine, that spreads the horrid stench of pestilential filth, wafts far and wide the exquisite perfume of field and flower. The wine is never mistaken for the lees, though both are trodden in the one press.

* 2 Tim. ii. 19.

Thus the same afflictions, however sore they may be, overwhelm the wicked while they cleanse the just; and, in spite of all that human tongue can say against you, you will never be taken for anything but what you are, provided that you have the courage to appear in your true colours.

Take the medicine! If you are assaulted by temptation, keep on your way, and you will tire out the temptation and leave it behind you.

But, you say, I am the victim of this man's violent behaviour. Well, wait awhile. The wicked shall soon cease from troubling. When one is ill minutes seem hours. The sufferer asks for something to drink. Each watcher at his bedside hurries off to be of service. He is the only one that thinks they are slow about it.

"TO-DAY," says the Son of God. Be of good cheer! It cannot be for long. This life of ours ebbs fast enough away. It will be gone as a brief winter day which dawns but to decline. 'Tis but a day, a moment, to which weariness lends a seeming length. When it is over, then you will realize how fleeting it has been.

Ah! When once you have entered upon the life to come——!

"Yes! But here I am groaning in this life present, sore let and hindered by all kinds of evil." Well, give way to impatience, and what the better will you be for it? Will it mend

matters to add to the ills you have, the newer ills of vexation and perhaps rebellion? Do at any rate turn your misery to the best account lest you be found of the number of those to whom Saint Augustine addressed this telling remark: *You are getting nothing out of your sufferings. They made you miserable and will leave you wicked.**

"O Life, O Death, O World, O Time,
O Grave where all things flow,
'Tis yours to make our lot sublime
With your great weight of woe.
Though sharpest anguish hearts may wring,
Though bosoms torn may be,
Yet Suffering is a Holy Thing;
Without it what were we!"

R. C. TRENCH.

* Perdidistis utilitatem calamitatis et miserrimi facti estis, et pessimi permanistis.

APPENDIX

THE Great French Preacher thus accounts for this practice of reciting the Hail Mary at the commencement of sermons : " What is the duty of the Preacher but to beget Jesus the Christ in the souls of his hearers ? *My little children*, says the Apostle, *of whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you.* So that there is a certain parallelism between Preachers of the Divine Word and the Holy Mother of God. So that Saint Gregory the Great did not hesitate to call those who are ordained to this glorious Ministry, *Mothers of God.* Hence it came to pass that the Church easily persuaded herself that thou, O most highly favoured Mary, blessed above all women, predestinated from all eternity to engender after the flesh the Son of the Most High, wouldest be willing by thy pious intercession to help those who must now beget him after the Spirit in the hearts of all the Faithful." —Bossuet, " Panegyric upon Saint Bernard."

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